

CONTROL **YOUR MIND** **AND** **MASTER** **YOUR FEELINGS**

**THIS BOOK INCLUDES
BREAKING OVERTHINKING &
MASTER YOUR EMOTIONS**



ERIC ROBERTSON

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Breaking Overthinking

**Set Your Mind Free from Destructive
Thoughts and Never let Anxiety or
Negative Thinking get in the way of a
Happy and Fulfilled Life**

Eric Robertson

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A New Dawn

Prepare to Unchain

Overthinking is undeniably one of the biggest causes of mental health illnesses. It results in depression, insomnia, anxiety, and self-destructive behaviors. This is because the individual does not know how to stop thinking and so they obsess over things they cannot control or things they wish they had done or haven't yet done. Our minds become overwhelmed with the 'what if's' and all the mistakes we have made - the relationships that keep you guessing, the habits that you do automatically that you don't realize. Your body is wounded, and your mind is tired. If that isn't enough to keep our minds busy, our surroundings are cluttered and you may feel as if you have no way out of this nightmare.

Does this sound familiar? If so, you have definitely come to the right place. When you learn how to recognize your self-destructive behaviors as a result of overthinking, you will know how to beat the problem. I'm referring to negative thinking and over-worrying about things that hold no importance in your life. The only reason it feels as though these things are important is that you have been stuck in your own mind for so long that you don't know how to escape it. No wonder life feels crazier than it should.

The solution is right here in this book. It's not just one solution; its multiple ways you can overcome your mind and feed into the desires that you want from life. "Breaking Overthinking" will teach you about what happens in your mind that leaves your body stressed. It will also teach you the many ways on how to cope and overcome these feelings. There are five fictional chains that you have to break in order to solve the problem of overthinking. These five chains - a cluttered mind, the wounded body, surroundings, habits, and toxic people - will help you understand the best ways that you can break free of this mind trap and start living life to the fullest. Together we will tackle each chain one by one in an easy to follow manner but not before you will understand the scientific causes of overthinking. My promise to you is that by the end of this book you will have learned beneficial ways to overcome these

negative patterns. You will start understanding who you are and how to be aware of this overthinking process that currently has you trapped.

Did you know that a rise in depression and anxiety rates has stemmed from overthinking? Overthinking and excessive worrying has become more and more of a problem in today's society. This continues to happen because no one knows how to fix their lives, and it honestly takes a lot of dedication to get there. However, with the strategies in this book, you will learn how to stop overthinking, take care of those excessive worries, calm your mind, and develop positivity. Overthinking and excessive worry are the main problems that are holding you back, so what are you waiting for? Don't you want to get out of your head and into real life?

I know what you must be thinking, 'yeah right, one book can teach me all that, and my life will just be better?' No, it won't be better if you just read the book; it will be better if you practice the exercises and the structured and thoroughly researched strategies inside this book. Don't overthink, just do. After all, part of the problem with overthinking is well... OVERTHINKING. So, let's look at the proof. How many of your friends do you know that are not overthinkers lead a positive and healthy life? Sure, they don't have everything together - their lives aren't perfect - but they sure are getting sleep at night. Their relationships seem happy, and their lives are fulfilling. If you want that, then a positive mindset and healthy downtimes can really help you towards that goal. This book shows you how.

I can promise you that once you are finished with this book, you will feel encouraged and motivated to be who you have always wanted to be - whether that's a confident and outgoing individual or a calm and enlightened person. Your wish is my promise as long as you promise to be consistent and give every strategy in this book a fair and proper chance.

So, are you ready for the challenge? I know you are and a deeper part of you knows it too. What are you waiting for, dive in and learn how to turn your life around in just a few short steps.

After all, don't you think life is too short to waste it on negative thinking?

Chapter One: Meet Your Opponent

Overthinking can accompany most people that have problems with negative thoughts and excessive worrying. While worrying and negative thoughts have significant impacts, did you know that overthinking can become a disorder? Most people with overthinking disorder also grapple with associated anxiety or other mood disorders, however, overthinking disorder and anxiety disorders are not the same. To sum it up in one sentence, a good explanation for overthinking disorder is when people think about something for too long and/or too much while being unable to redirect their minds to something else.

Overthinking can be about one thing, or many things at once; however, it is defined as thinking about whatever the issue is with an inability to redirect the mind. This can cause other things to happen like obsessing over the past or worrying about the future. Additionally, when someone overthinks too much, and over a long period of time, they can develop negative thinking patterns as well. Overthinking, excessive worry and negative thinking patterns become intertwined and all wrapped up together can cause extreme feelings of anxiety and may result in social disasters or becoming socially afraid. As weird as this may sound, it is normal to worry about your life and everything that is happening in it. So, you may be the type of person reading this and thinking 'I have overthinking disorder,' however, this may not be the case.

First ask yourself, when I overthink, does it result in overwhelming feelings of anxiety or panic? When I overthink, do I get headaches? Do I overthink so much that it stops me from living my life? Do simple tasks seem daunting or worrisome? If your answers are yes, then you may be at risk for having or developing an overthinking disorder. If you experience one or more of these symptoms while you overthink, then you may have or are developing a disorder from overthinking:

- Difficulty holding effective communication with someone due to readdressing the same concern or thought repeatedly until the

conversation ends.

- Comparing yourself to others and feeling as though you have to measure up to them, or give in to their expectations, or think that they look down on you.
- Always thinking about the worst-case scenarios - catastrophizing everything, all the time.
- Reliving, and obsessing over past failures, or what you could have, should have, would have done, to the point where you cannot seem to get past it.
- Excessively worrying about the future, until every goal or task feels close to impossible to accomplish.
- Being unable to cope with past trauma due to constant overthinking about the event.
- Inability to slow down, or stop thinking or worrying, and experiencing overwhelming emotions associated with your thoughts.

If you feel as though you have developed some of these symptoms, or know someone who has, remember that no two people are the same when it comes to this disorder. Everyone thinks differently, so everyone obsesses differently as well. As these symptoms develop, you may feel as though you are socially awkward or are harshly judged in social settings due to the inability to control your emotions and negative thoughts. This can result in the avoidance of going out, which then creates an even more vicious cycle in the overthinking process because negative thoughts pop in your head about whether you are good enough. Due to having an overthinking disorder, you may find it difficult to enjoy hobbies, be productive at work, and socialize, due to the energy you spend on obsessing or trying to perfect everything in your life. This vicious cycle can be extremely damaging to your health and your brain. Further, due to the fear of what to say, how you say something and how someone else will take what you have to say, you may find it hard to make friends or maintain relationships.

In short, overthinking is the same definition as a “worry wart.” If this all sounds very familiar to you, then you may now understand why you have difficulties in every aspect of your life. Overthinking can impact your social life, your career, and your personal life. Eventually, this type of thinking can have significant wear and tear on your brain (which we will learn about in the next chapter). So, what do you do about it? The truth is, you need to start accepting that you cannot perfect everything, you are not a mind-reader, and as hard as you try, you cannot stop bad things from happening nor can you stop yourself from walking into bad situations. What you can, and should do, is get much-needed help.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural response our body implements to react to stress. It surrounds feelings of fear or panic about future events - like the first day of school, or a job, giving a speech, or going on a trip. Although anxiety is a normal response to future events, some people may call it being nervous. However, anxiety becomes a problem when it controls your waking life. While it is normal to feel nervous or anxious about moving to a new place, starting a new job, or taking a test, it is not normal to have feelings of overwhelming fear and panic surrounding these types of changes.

In extreme cases, anxiety will stop you from socializing, going out, trying new things, flying, entering an elevator, and you may even avoid leaving your home. It can affect anyone at any age and is one of the most common mood disorders. Anxiety disorders take many forms, and there are different types:

- **Panic disorder** - Overwhelming or intense fear and impending doom at any given time for no apparent reason, known as panic attacks.
- **Phobia** - Overwhelming fear of a certain or particular object, situation, place, or activity.
- **Social anxiety disorder (SAD)** - Excessive fear of being judged

by others in social events.

- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)** - Repeated irrational thoughts that lead to performing repetitive actions and behaviors, such as counting, washing hands, or overly organizing.
- **Separation anxiety disorder** - Feeling extremely homesick when being away from home or feeling detached from reality when being away from loved ones.
- **Illness anxiety disorder** - Intense fear about your health; also known as hypochondria, stemming from feelings of paranoia over almost everything.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** - Flashbacks or recurring memories of past traumatic events resulting in overwhelming fear and anxiety.

For everyone, symptoms of anxiety are different, and cannot be felt the same in two individuals that suffer from the disorder. Feelings range from knots in your stomach to feeling unable to breathe. Sometimes, you may feel like your mind is 'foggy' or like you are disconnected from reality - known as dissociation. You may experience nightmares or insomnia, panic and anxiety attacks (which are not the same), intrusive thoughts, or painful memories that you cannot control. Other symptoms are as follows:

- Difficulty falling and staying asleep
- Hyperventilating
- Feelings of impending doom
- Sweating
- Unable to focus or concentrate
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Restlessness

- Increased heart rate
- Distress
- Always feeling tense or on edge
- Constant uncontrollable worry
- Chills and hot flashes
- Choking feelings
- Overwhelming fear
- Numbness or tingling in certain parts of your body

These symptoms can happen all at once, or one at a time, and are often experienced during a panic attack. These symptoms can happen to you if you have an overthinking disorder as well.

The Difference Between Anxiety and Worry

Anxiety and worry are two separate mental states occurring in different regions of the brain. You can experience worry without anxiety, and vice versa; however, most of the time, one triggers the other and these tend to go hand-in-hand. In short, worrying is overthinking about problems that may or may not have happened yet, and anxiety is what you feel inside your body when you worry.

So, now that we have talked about what anxiety is, the question is, what exactly is worry? Worrying is cognitive based and occurs in the mind. The prefrontal cortex region of your brain interacts with the limbic system which is responsible for sending signals to the rest of your body and controls your emotions and intuition. The same neurons used for planning and problem-solving skills are the same neurons used for when we worry. The main difference is the amount of emotional attachment we put into problem-solving as opposed to worrying. When these regions of the brain are taken over by excessive worry, or overthinking, you may struggle with accessing the planning and problem-solving neural structure that would normally allow you to focus on a given task or building connections with others. Instead,

worry takes over, making it difficult to make wise decisions and maintain healthy change.

Now, most people might say that anxiety is 'all in your head'. However, it is not, and it is essential to get this right. While excessive worrying is often 'all in your head', anxiety develops from the excessive worry and sends high cortisol hormones throughout your body resulting in attacks. Like worrying, or overthinking, anxiety is associated with the limbic system which interacts with the amygdala, hippocampus, and hypothalamus structures of your brain, all of which are responsible for you feeling fear. The limbic system is more responsible for trend-spotting, idea-connecting, and pattern-finding - the skills needed for problem-solving and planning.

So, what is the main difference between worrying (overthinking) and anxiety? You may be able to talk yourself down, or out of excessive worrying and intrusive thoughts, whereas with anxiety, it is just there. It occurs when least expected, or you may feel anxious all the time, as if your brain is on overload, and you are a time bomb, waiting to go off. Worrying is easier to calm down, and is not necessarily life-changing, whereas anxiety is a state of being that can change and rule your life.

What is Negative Thinking?

There are different types of negative thinking which come in two forms - worry and rumination. These negative or overthinking forms come in two styles as well. First is worry - when you only think or worry about negative things happening. The second is rumination - when you always think about yourself while finding it challenging to control or stop it.

Worrying is when you think about something, or constantly stress over something, that may or may not be a problem. However, you make it a problem and obsess over thoughts and images which then create negative feelings, which can result in something negative happening. This negative way of thinking is often uncontrollable, and overwhelming, for future events.

Rumination is when someone uncontrollably forms negative thoughts centered on themselves. They obsess over past failures and

what could have happened if they did things differently. The common emotion stemming from rumination is often depression.

The main aspect of worrying, overthinking, and negative thought patterns are that you constantly stress and worry over things you can't control, like past and future events. The best thing to do to take care of this is to accept that what is done is done and the future is untold, so all that matters is what you can do right now. What you do in the present can help you learn from past mistakes and alter your perception of what will happen in the future. Worrying only causes stress, and it takes practice to get out of this habit. By worrying so much, you are actually training your brain to become tense and over-driven, which is the main reason why fear, anxiety, and feelings of sadness and guilt can happen.

Often people will develop an unhealthy habit to cope with their over-stressed mind, as a way to turn off the negativity. People can develop a drinking, drug, and/or smoking habit, which may settle the mind temporarily, but then causes other problems on its own. Maybe harming oneself, or lashing out, feels better than living inside your head. Also, work productivity, and loss of enjoyment in activities may happen. Suddenly you find yourself sitting alone thinking even more about all your mistakes, and so it becomes a vicious cycle. The problem here is that you are not fixing your core issue - overthinking - you are making it worse. However, it's a good thing you decided to read this book, as the following chapters will explain step-by-step how to overcome this negativity and implement change while dealing with the fear and becoming accepting of new opportunities.

Cognitive Distortions

What's a cognitive distortion you ask? Stemming from overthinking patterns, cognitive distortions are ways that our brain tricks us into believing something is certain when it is actually very false. They serve no purpose and are unhealthy ways that our brains keep us in a bad frame of mind, repeating the negative thinking cycle that we have in the first place. Even though the thoughts may sound rational, they are not,

and are just excuses to continue feeling bad about ourselves and the world around us.

Eight of the most common cognitive distortions are as follows:

1. **Filtering** - Filtering is about someone taking negative details and magnifying them, and filtering out all the positive possibilities to do with the situation. For example, you may think 'I failed my test; now I am a failure; I can't do anything right; I will never pass anything ever.'
2. **Black and White thinking (all or nothing)** - It's either be perfect or completely fail. This type of thinking has nothing in between, you are either extremely happy or the exact opposite. You are either very positive or very negative, there is no compromise with this way of thinking. For example, say you have an argument with a loved one, you may think 'that's it, we don't know each other anymore, and I will never talk to them again.'
3. **Overgeneralization** - This cognitive distortion may make you think that based on one single incident, that is the way it is, no turning back or moving forward. Meaning this same thing based on a single piece of evidence will happen again and again as a never-ending pattern of defeat. For example, you aren't picked for a team, or promotion, you may think, 'I'm not good at anything; I never get picked; I obviously can't do anything right.'
4. **Jumping to Conclusions** - This way of thinking says that you know exactly what someone feels or thinks about you without any evidence proving your conclusion. You fortune tell everything, and just seem to 'know' exactly what to expect with nothing to back up your conclusion. For example, someone looks your way and you think 'she must

think I am a horrible person; I know she doesn't like me.' Another example is, you anticipate that things will end badly, 'I just know I am going to fail; I'm not going to beat my deadline; I will get fired.'

5. **Catastrophizing** - No matter what happens, there is gonna be a disaster. In this distortion you may hear about a problem, then question the what-ifs about the whole thing, and come up with an absolute nightmare as a solution. For example, your car breaks down, 'my car broke down, which means I will be late to grab my children from school; they will hate me; the teachers will look down on me; I will be the laugh of the town.'
6. **Emotional reasoning** - Emotional reasoning means that because you *feel* a certain way that it's obviously true or going to come true. For example, you feel sad so you think 'I am sad and miserable, it must mean that I am a depressing miserable person.'
7. **Minimization** - You minimize even the good things that are happening to you and make every outcome a negative one. For example, someone compliments you so you think 'he only complimented me because he knows I am weak, and so he feels sympathy for me. It doesn't mean he likes me.'
8. **Disqualifying the Positive** - This means that nothing positive ever happens to you because you don't see things this way. For example, someone notices your initiative and encourages you to continue, you may think 'I took the initiative because I had to.'

Knowing how to identify these cognitive distortions is the first step to overcoming them. Regardless of whether you identify yourself with one or multiple distortions, later on in this book, you will learn how to overcome every single one of them.

What is Stress?

Stress is any type of change that is put on the body that requires adjustment in your life. Stress is normal and is with you every day brought on by how you feel and perceive what happens to you. Life-changes, such as a promotion or birth of a baby, can bring on stress - as well as when you undergo some sort of environmental change like moving or routine adjustment. Stress does not have to be negative, as it can motivate you, keep you alert, and inspire you to handle whatever comes your way. It only becomes dangerous or difficult to manage when you continuously undergo stress without taking some downtime or relaxation from it.

Continuous stress turns into distress which can lead to headaches, upset stomachs, muscle tension, increased blood pressure, weight gain or dramatic loss of weight, and difficulty getting enough rest. This type of stress can be brought on by **overthinking or worrying** too much. Such overthinking/worrying can result in developing disorders such as anxiety, depression, heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, and in worst case scenarios suicide.

Here are some warning signs of stress:

- Dizziness or feeling spaced out
- Aches and pains throughout your body
- Teeth grinding, or clenched jaw
- Headaches
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Muscle tension
- Heart rate increase
- Chills

- Extreme fatigue or exhaustion
- Sexual difficulties
- Trembling or shaking

Stress is a serious matter and must be taken care of right away. In order to decrease the amount of stress in your life, you may want to keep a healthy routine that balances self-care, self-kindness, exercise, healthy diet, and positivity. Take breaks from the world and make time just for you. When you take these downtimes, read your favorite book, or do something that doesn't require a whole lot of thinking like meditation or mindfulness yoga. Manage your time effectively and don't take on more than you can handle. Learn to say no, and do something for yourself before you take care of others.

Ways Overthinking Can Cause Unnecessary Stress

Whether something huge just happened, or all the small things just ended up breaking the camel's back, whatever stress you are undergoing, there can be associated unnecessary stressors that you may be experiencing without even noticing. These next few items are not worth your energy, and you need to focus on other things instead. The following is a list of the causes of stress that you need to drop now.

1. Rethinking past stressful situations -

Replaying a stressful event is not going to do you any good because it has already happened, and the only way to change it is to live in the moment for right now. Take time to be mindful, and meditate while thinking positive things - such as inhaling and thinking 'I am' then exhaling and thinking 'peaceful'.

2. Procrastination - This is perhaps the most common stress increaser because the more you procrastinate about something, the more you put it off, and whether it's important or not, it needs

your attention. If you feel you are stuck in this trap, you may feel frustrated. This is where time management comes in. Look at your 'to-do' list and learn how to prioritize. Then break the most needed things into smaller portions, so the list doesn't seem so overwhelming. Tackle one task at a time.

3. **Showing up late** - No one likes to be late and sometimes being late is completely out of your control - like traffic back-up, or kids, and last minute appointments. Other reasons for being late may include you saying yes to things you didn't really want to do, or you may be overwhelmed or afraid to attend. Know when to say no due to the overload you already have. Practice on not feeling guilty but work on 'making it up to them.' You need to take care of yourself first.
4. **Worrying about money that is already gone** - This type of stress causing worry is a form of overthinking and is actually much like the first stressor on the list. It is unnecessary and doesn't need to take up your attention because the past is the past. The truth is that money comes and goes and shouldn't hold as much importance to people as it does. You can and will make more, or get more, and you will always spend it. However, creating a savings plan is the most beneficial step for you to take if obsessing over the fact that it's gone has you completely fretting. Make an emergency fund, then pretend it's not there. Make a list of the reasons why you would need to pull from the fund. This way, you won't stress that you don't have any money, and the list will help you decide whether you need something badly enough to pull from your emergency fund or not.

5. **Clutter** - Clutter, whether it's in your mind or on your desk, is actually your subconscious mind telling you that you are overworked. It may not feel like it, but clutter can be a big stressor, especially if you are the type of person to stay on top of things and be organized. Don't let the clutter bother you, set aside some time to go through your clutter (mentally and literally) and do something about it.

Chapter Summary

Having to process this much information can lead you feeling a bit overwhelmed. Given the purpose of this book, this is the last thing we want. That's why this summary will give you a quick overview of the most important aspects we just covered. Remember that knowing your opponent before a battle is essential to ensure that you emerge victoriously.

In this chapter, we learned:

- What anxiety is.
- What the difference between anxiety, worrying, and overthinking is.
- What overthinking disorder is, aside from what normal overthinking is.
- What negative thinking is and the cognitive distortions that form from negative thinking patterns.
- What stress is.
- What normal stress as opposed to bad stress is, and why overthinking doesn't help.

In the next chapter you will learn what happens in the brain to cause you to overthink, and the many dangers that come with it if you don't learn how to manage your obsessive worries. We will also learn how to cope with - and understand why - overthinking can turn into a life-threatening situation, as well as how you can tone down overwhelming thoughts to get a much-deserved break. The next chapter is about learning the dangers, and why it is so important to overcome them as soon as possible.

Chapter Two: The Dangers Behind Overthinking

There are some major health risks that can result from overthinking and excessive worrying. When the brain becomes stressed out due to the lack of sleep resulting from the racing thoughts, parts of the brain actually start to decrease in size or change in shape. For example, the hippocampus is the part of the brain that is responsible for memories and storing short-term data, when you overthink or become essentially a “worry wart,” this part of your brain shrinks in size. The hippocampus is linked to the amygdala, which is then linked to the limbic system. The limbic system is responsible for the emotions we feel, our survival instincts, and our long-term memory. When the hippocampus or any part of the limbic system is affected, our body’s natural instinctual response system sends false signals to our body that we could be in danger. Due to this process, surges of cortisol get produced in large amounts throughout our body. Cortisol is the hormone that gives us symptoms of anxiety attacks and PTSD trauma. As we dive deeper into this chapter, I will help you understand in more depth to what these parts of the brain have an effect on.

Overthinking is essentially the inability to get out of your head. Your negative thoughts keep you up at night, causing insomnia issues. Your worries keep you tense and stressed which keeps you irritable and promotes drastic mood swings. Stress also leaves you with tension headaches and makes it so you are unable to focus or concentrate. With that said, areas in your life like your career and parenting skills might suffer. If this type of behavior and thinking pattern goes on for extended periods of time, you may end up suffering from a chronic disorder such as anxiety, depression, borderline personality disorder, bipolar, etc...

The dangers of being an over-thinker are as follows:

1. Your chances of developing a mental illness increases.

In the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, a study reports that constantly thinking about your mistakes, failures, and issues can greatly increase your risk of developing a mental health disorder

or problem. Pensiveness results in a vicious cycle which can be extremely hard to break, as it becomes a habit. The cycle is where the more your mental health decreases, the more likely you are to overthink things, which leads you back to more mental health problems.

2. Problem-solving skills become difficult.

Analysis paralysis is a real thing that, in short, is defined by literally paralyzing your problem-solving and decision-making skills. People believe that overthinking is actually helping because they are rehashing everything they haven't thought about, which will stop future problems from arising. However, this is not the case.

The thing about overthinkers is that they never come to a solution for their issues at hand. Rather, they get into this habit of constantly thinking about the issues which are forefront in their mind but may not be critical issues - such as, what they should wear (to impress others) and where to go on vacation (and create problems about the places in which they go on vacation to). This creates an analysis paralysis situation, even if the individual doesn't feel as though they are paralyzed. The bottom line here is that because there is no solution to the ongoing stressors that the individual experiences, the constant dwelling makes it difficult for someone to make a decision and stick with it.

3. Sleep is disrupted.

As previously mentioned, overthinking causes sleep disturbances, and may even turn into a full on insomnia disorder. Worrying all the time, and having the inability to shut your mind off, can cause you to get fewer hours of sleep at night, and can cause you to not get good enough sleep also.

4. Trying new things seems impossible.

Trying new things seems impossible because rather than just doing it, an overthinker will 'overthink' all of the ins and outs of their decision before trying anything. Soon, they will come up with all of the reasons why they shouldn't, rather than all of the reasons they should. Eventually, they will look back on all of the opportunities they missed out on, and prepare to do something

new when the chance happens again. However, when the chance presents itself, the cycle repeats, and then it becomes habitual that opportunities don't seem to be happening.

5. Self-doubt becomes prevalent.

Self-doubting thoughts happen because of those cognitive distortions we talked about in Chapter One. Thinking too much about everything often makes us question and second-guess everything around us. You may feel as though you aren't making the right choices or that all your decisions will end in bad outcomes. For example, your friend may ask you to help them with a project they were working on, but because you question your own abilities, you may wonder why it was *you* they asked help from. Let's say, you do help your friend and stumble upon one part of their project that seems a little more difficult. Now your thoughts might be racing about why you should have said no in the first place or you are bad at this, and now your friend is going to be upset with you. Can you figure out which cognitive distortions this type of thinking is? Remind yourself about the cognitive distortions found in *Chapter One - Meet your Opponent*, under *What is Negative Thinking?*.

6. Decreases your enjoyment with activities.

Overthinking generally keeps you existing in the past or the future. So, when you try to focus on the moment, your thoughts are distracting you from what is going on right now. This takes away from your enjoyment with the things you are trying to do. For example, if you had just gotten a raise or a promotion, it's hard to be happy and enjoy the promotion when your mind constantly spirals around thoughts of why you deserve this promotion.

7. Can lead to mood disorders like anxiety.

Just like we discussed in Chapter One, overthinking can be a sign of anxiety and vice versa. Overthinking causes anxiety because of the continuous habit to re-evaluate every circumstance. In a way, you are training your brain to think this way, in which it starts to form and create neurons that process and develop hormone changes. This can result in decreased healthy chemicals in the

brain, reduced serotonin levels, and create anxiety and other mood disorders.

Overthinking stems from being a perfectionist, from having low self-esteem, or from life just being too hectic and crazy that there is no time to settle. When you don't give attention to your brain, your thoughts spiral out of control because of the very fact that you are trying to avoid them and push them away. If you don't practice meditation or mindfulness, you may need to seek more help from a professional who can introduce you to therapies such as dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

The Limbic System

The limbic system was mentioned briefly above, in which we discussed that the limbic system governs our emotional functioning by sending hormonal responses throughout your body. It consists of three neural areas: the hippocampus, amygdala, and the hypothalamus. The limbic system is the part of the brain responsible for regulating emotions, stress, anxiety, and other distressing feelings. Also, it takes what we see, and how we interpret situations and turns them into how we respond emotionally to them. The hippocampus and amygdala along with other regions play important roles in helping the limbic system do its job. The amygdala is a small almond-shaped structure in the limbic system which fires responses from anxiety. The hippocampus is the part of the limbic system where memories form, and then are moved to be sorted and stored elsewhere by the amygdala and the larger limbic system.

The Hippocampus

During a distressing encounter, the hippocampus is activated and is mainly accountable for memory functions and processing. What the hippocampus function initially suggests is that past experiences and memories associated with present experiences can heighten or conduct distressing emotions, leading to anxiety symptoms. The hippocampus, as mentioned, plays an important role in the limbic system which is

responsible for regulating sensations you feel in your body caused by your emotions. The limbic system is also responsible for memory and how your intuition works.

The hippocampus not only organizes and interprets new memories, but it also connects your experiences (sensations and emotions) to these memories. For example, say you just got promoted in your career, the hippocampus stores the missed information (surrounding, sights, sounds, and smells) and then if you experience another good thing, like a raise two weeks later, you may be reminded, or have a flashback of your promotion. Can you remember a time where a sign, phrase, or smell has triggered a past memory? This is what the hippocampus does.

Brain scientists have found that there is a rear part of the hippocampus that implements different types of memory. The rear part of the hippocampus processes spatial memories. Spatial memory processing is when someone memorizes the route to different places in a big city or memorizes complex things turning it into photographic memory. Sleep regroups these memories and grows the rear part of the hippocampus which leads to better memory. It is believed that the hippocampus registers and temporarily stores these spatial and short-term memories then ships them to the long-term memory center of the brain.

When the hippocampus is damaged - due to chronic stress caused by overthinking everything - you may find it difficult to remember things such as dates, events, names, and putting memories into chronological order. Damage to the left hippocampus affects how you recall verbal information. Damage to the right hippocampus affects the ability to recall visual information. Damage to the hippocampus means that this part of the brain can actually shrink in size. If it shrinks you have a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and significant decreases in memory performance.

The Amygdala

The amygdala is an almond-shaped region of the brain located in the temporal lobe part of the brain. There is one portion of the

amygdala on either side of your brain and both are thought to be part of the limbic system. The amygdala is mainly responsible for processing and perceiving emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear, along with controlling aggression. It stores long-term memory and works with the hippocampus to process and store memories of experiences and emotions to be able to recognize future events. For example, say you were in a car accident, the amygdala would process this event and perceive the emotion for cars or driving as fear. So, the next time you drive, or are in a car on the highway (or wherever the accident took place in) you may have heightened emotions of fear and become more alert to your surroundings while in the vehicle. Depending on how big or small your amygdala is, it can increase or decrease your aggressive behaviors, such as acting or not acting on impulses. The bigger your amygdala is the less likely you will have the urge to act on impulsive behaviors; the smaller in size it is, the more likely you are to behave in an aggressive nature.

Damage to the amygdala results in problems with memory formation and learning, creates fear and sensitivity to emotions, and is associated with a higher risk of depression. Since it is strongly correlated with the limbic system where hormones are produced, and where temperature and appetite are controlled, any type of amygdala damage will greatly impact your ability to function. For that matter, if any part of the limbic system is damaged, such as the amygdala, you may experience reduced feelings of hunger satiety, as emotional responses will have changed. The amygdala and the hippocampus work together to process and store memories. In short, the hippocampus breaks apart and compartmentalizes perceptions of experiences while the amygdala processes your emotions involving these experiences (people, situations, sensations, and things).

Hypothalamus

The hypothalamus is located between the pituitary gland and the thalamus in the center of the brain. It is responsible for producing hormones and stimulating sensations in the body. If the hypothalamus

is damaged, it can cause mood disorders. The main role of the hypothalamus is to keep the body in **homeostasis**¹ as much as possible. For example, to keep the body in homeostasis, the hypothalamus sends signals to the brain to let you know that you need more nutrients if you are hungry.

The hypothalamus reacts as a link between the endocrine and nervous systems to accomplish a homeostatic state. The main functions it plays a role in are:

- Body temperature
- Thirst
- Appetite
- Emotions
- Sleep routines
- Libido
- Childbirth
- Blood pressure and sugar levels
- Balancing bodily liquids

If any of these functions become unbalanced, it is the responsibility of the hypothalamus to regulate or send signals to you so that you can balance these functions. For example, if you are suffering from a fever, the hypothalamus will make the body sweat to try to cool itself down. It also works in the opposite way - such as creating goosebumps and causing you to shiver if you are too cold.

The hypothalamus is also responsible for processing hormones, in which it works with the pituitary gland to send hormones throughout the body. Hormones controlled by the hypothalamus include:

- **Antidiuretic hormone** - increases how much water is absorbed into the blood by the kidneys.
- **Corticotropin-releasing hormone** - this is responsible for regulating metabolism and immune responses.
- **Gonadotropin-releasing hormone** - this keeps the sexual organs in control and working properly.

- **Oxytocin hormone** - oxytocin stimulates a mother's breast milk to work, regulates body temperature, and controls balanced sleep cycles.
- **Prolactin-controlling hormone** - in lactating mothers, it tells the body how much or less milk to produce.
- **Thyrotropin-releasing hormone** - the thyroid is what this hormone is in control of. It releases the hormones that stabilize metabolism, energy, and developmental growth.

If any part of the brain that functions inside the limbic system is damaged, or not working to its full potential, then your hormones will be out of whack. Also, your emotions will be more challenging to manage, which develops uncontrollable symptoms revolving around disorders such as anxiety or depression. Overthinking and excessive worrying, created by negative thought patterns, can increase the risk of having these parts of the brain damaged.

How to Reduce Overthinking

Cortisol is a stress hormone and when released into your body drives symptoms of sweating, shaking, feelings of fear, nausea, and other alarming sensations. When you overthink, you are actually causing unnecessary stress to your system which then stimulates the hypothalamus to produce excess amounts of cortisol. This is why you have anxiety attacks or become triggered out of what seems to be nowhere. The amygdala and the hippocampus work together to process the experiences you go through into memories. These memories can lead to triggers later on when you undergo what you have trained your brain to feel as fearful or dangerous. Have you ever just sat there, having fun with your friends, and out of the blue you experience a panic attack? That is because the conversation, or the environment, or even an odor has triggered the hippocampus to send danger signals to the amygdala, which then activates the hypothalamus to send hormones throughout the body to prepare for the perceived danger. This only happens when the limbic system is damaged. The cure to this is to stop

overthinking. But how? The next few steps are some broad general guidelines to retrain your brain out of overthinking:

1. **See the bigger picture** - When you overthink, you sometimes overthink about all the tiny details regarding one situation so that the problem seems bigger than it really is. So, train your brain to look at your problem as a whole. For example, say there is a problem in your relationship and your spouse is ignoring you. You perceive them as avoiding you and then start to unravel all of the reasons why you aren't good enough. You spiral out of control and think about if they could be seeing someone else and come up with the worst-case scenario. Stop right there! Instead, look at it as a whole. They may not be ignoring you, they may just have a lot on their minds so they aren't focused on you. Ask yourself, are they under a lot of stress? Is this out of character for them? Do they make time for you on a regular basis? Give yourself and your relationship some credit, why did you get involved to begin with? Try to find solutions to how you can stop this avoidance tactic and talk with them. Look at what is important rather than trying to think about all the small details that will drive you insane.
2. **Be comfortable with the unknown** - One factor that remains true throughout the course of this book, or just in general life circumstances is that you cannot control everything, nor can you know the future. Overthinkers generally focus on the uncertainty in their lives because they are trying to avoid disasters or solve what cannot be solved. Focus more on what you can

control rather than worrying about the unknown events and spinning it into something bigger than what it is. And, what it is, is nothing yet because it is uncertain. An example scenario of this uncertainty that an overthinker tries to control or avoid is this - you may think 'what could they have meant when they said (blank).' Instead of stressing about it, a simple solution is to ask the person to clarify what they meant. Another example is this - say you went to a job interview and everything went really well. The employer said they would give you a callback and it's been almost a week, or maybe over a week. Now your mind is spiraling thinking 'what's taking them so long?' 'Was I not good enough?' 'Have they chosen someone else?' Then you obsess over all of the things you could have said, the things you could have changed, and continue to bash yourself because now you think you won't get it. Stop! First, understand that what is done is done, and cannot be changed. Overthinking and stressing about what could have happened - or what might or might not happen - is only training your brain into unhealthy patterns which can damage the limbic system. Second, understand that the future is always uncertain, and uncertainty isn't always a negative thing. Control what you can, and distract your mind from what you can't. Remember, you can always follow up, so focus on what you are going to say when you call them back. Also, if you don't get the job, it doesn't mean that you didn't do something right, it just means that this job wasn't the

right fit for you, and you have the opportunity to truly find your calling. In every negative experience, there is a positive, a lesson to learn from and an opportunity to grow. Tell yourself that it is okay to be uncertain and live your life the way you want because spiraling down won't help anything.

3. **Observe your negative thoughts** - In most cases, people who overthink are already aware of their negative thoughts and how they feel about themselves and the world around them. Instead of acting on your emotional impulses resulting from your negative thoughts, observe the negativity. Be mindful of your negative thinking and see them as just thoughts. Let them come and go as they are going to. For example, if you are having a 'bad hair day,' and your thoughts are stressing you because all you can think is 'I am ugly' or 'why do I look like this?', don't feed into these thoughts or label them as good or bad. Just notice them and understand that just because it's a thought, it doesn't mean it needs to make you feel bad. Acknowledge the thought, then shrug it off, and replace it with something better. 'Just because I am having a bad hair day, does not mean I am definitely ugly or look bad. These days will happen and I am okay with this.'
4. **Find something you can control** - This can be anything, but it has to be at least one thing you can control. Overthinkers are often perfectionists and will go to great lengths to make something perfect. For example, if you are planning a friends birthday party and everything is going wrong - like people

brought the wrong food, or you ran out of money for drinks - ask yourself, 'what is one thing I **can** control right now?' It may be controlling the guest list, or preparing dinner, or making an important phone call. Whatever it is, find one thing you can control in a stressful situation to get your mind and thoughts off of the things you can't control.

For people who are chronic worriers, and excessive thinkers, there may be some very negative consequences. Looking at the bigger picture, watching your thoughts, accepting what can't be known, and controlling one thing at a time is the first step to training your brain out of these unhealthy overthinking patterns.

Chapter Summary

The brain controls every aspect of what you do in your life. From ‘second nature’ things like using the bathroom, eating, and breathing to more complex things like making decisions. If we don’t take care of our physical well-being and our minds, then our brains will start to change, and form different perceptions of false realities.

Overthinking is an unhealthy trait that people develop over time which leads to constant stress and worry. If left unchecked it can even become second nature and habitual. By finding ways to reverse the damage to the limbic system (amygdala, hippocampus, and hypothalamus), you will start to understand that life is a lot easier without the constant unnecessary stress and worry.

In this chapter, we have learned:

- The dangers that overthinking can cause.
- The disorders that stem from overthinking.
- What the limbic system is, and the three regions of the brain that help it do what it needs to do.
- How damage to the hippocampus, amygdala, and hypothalamus can result in serious side effects causing mental and physical health issues.
- How to start training your brain to stop overthinking.

In the next chapter, you will learn a more in-depth description of what social anxiety is, and the different kinds of anxiety disorders there are. You will also learn how anxiety can affect your social life and social media, as well as the link between social media addictions and anxiety from overthinking. Finally, we will discuss how technology addictions cause many problems in an individual’s life and whether or not overthinking is the result of the addiction or if the addiction causes your mind to overthink.

Chapter Three: From Overthinking to Social Anxiety

In chapter one, we briefly talked about what anxiety was and the types of anxiety there are. To rehash, anxiety is a feeling of nervousness, being on edge, and constant worry about things we can't control. Anxiety is instinctive with the fact that our cortisol hormones raise when we feel we are in danger. However, most anxiety attacks are not happening because you are in actual danger but because the brain interprets you as being in danger. Anxiety can be closely related to and stem from depression, and vice-versa. This is because the hormones that our brain produces are almost identical to the hormones resulting from anxiety and depression, meaning the two disorders cause the same hormone releases such as cortisol surges. The types of anxiety disorders are:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder - OCD
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder - GAD
- Social Anxiety Disorder - SAD
- Panic Disorder
- Agoraphobia

We are going to focus mainly on **Social Anxiety Disorder** for this chapter because social media and addictions to technology are two main causes of having a social anxiety disorder. The main reason why people have a social anxiety disorder is because they are usually in their head *overthinking* about what others think of them. We often hide behind social media because it is easier to have a conversation through text message rather than in person. With how generations are developing, social media is becoming the main way to communicate, which causes addictions and is not healthy by any means. This chapter will explain why.

Social Anxiety Disorder - SAD

Many people experience feeling shy, or nervous in a social setting, but after some time their nerves die down and they become socially interactive. Others may be complete social butterflies but become overly afraid when it comes to having to give a presentation or speech in front of a large crowd. This is normal if you can get through it. However, someone who experiences social anxiety disorder feels distressed in these situations and may go to great lengths to avoid social interaction and contact because it makes them feel really uncomfortable. Social anxiety is also known as social phobia and is the most common of the anxiety disorders listed above. Check out the following list to see if your shyness goes beyond normal and if you could be developing a social anxiety disorder.

This list is a view on what socially anxious people have an extreme difficulty time with:

- Talking to strangers, meeting new people.
- Public speaking or speaking in front of a group of people.
- Dating and relationship conflict.
- Making and maintaining eye contact.
- Entering and exiting rooms with new people.
- Using public restrooms.
- Going to social events such as parties and business meetings.
- Eating in front of others.
- Going to work, school or college.
- Starting conversations and finishing them.

Not all these situations are the same for everyone experiencing such a disorder. For example, one person might struggle with starting conversations but have no problem using a public restroom. Whereas, for another person, it could be the opposite. Others may be really good at having one-on-one conversations but cannot face their fear of having to talk to a group of people. Social anxiety disorder happens differently for everyone.

There are many reasons why a socially anxious person may feel fearful of some of the above situations but in most cases, the reasons are pretty general. Someone may be fearful of being judged or humiliated in a social setting. Others may obsess about if they say or do something to upset or offend someone else. Another reason for being socially afraid is because they want to avoid being the center of attention at all costs because they overthink every situation that they are in. This is where overthinking causes social anxiety, and most times, you just need to get out of your head, and into the present moment.

Just like most anxiety disorders, the symptoms one may experience in a social setting are very close to the same stressful feelings. Here is a list of just **some** of the symptoms a person suffering from a social anxiety disorder may experience:

- Fast heart rate
- Tense muscles
- Dizziness and feeling like you are about to pass out (faintness)
- Digestive problems such as gut rot and bowel issues.
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling spacey, or like you are not here - “Out-of-body”
sensation as if you feel you are in a bubble or not inside your
body controlling yourself.

If these sound familiar, then you may experience them right before a social encounter or spend weeks obsessing over an upcoming event. Whatever the scenario, some or all of these symptoms may happen during an event, or before and/or after an event. So, you can see now that overthinking can lead to having such an overwhelming disorder.

If you let the disorder get the best of you, it can really take control of your life. You will start to avoid situations that involve people - or any interactions for that matter. You may even develop an awkward sense of communication, which will make your symptoms worse. When you avoid social situations, it will affect your interpersonal relationships and can lead to the following:

- Low self-esteem

- Negative thinking
- Depression
- Isolation
- Criticism sensitivity
- Social skills that don't improve or develop

Generally, social anxiety disorder starts in early adolescence and can be linked to bullying, teasing, or a history of abuse. Children with controlling or “narcissistic” parents may develop a shyness in social settings, which may develop long into adulthood. Another link to a social anxiety disorder - or any anxiety disorder for that matter - is that the amygdala could be overactive, stimulating the limbic system to crash.

The best way to overcome social anxiety is to act against your urges to isolate and withdraw from people. Instead, engage with one person, and gradually get comfortable doing more, and talking to new people. This is called exposure therapy, and will help you cope with and understand yourself when introduced to the social world gradually.

Social Media Addictions

Something that most people don't realize that is happening is, when someone develops a social anxiety disorder, they avoid social interaction, and they become a social media expert. But this expertise can branch into an addiction to social media really quickly, which becomes very unhealthy for your mental health. For example, do you get anxious when your phone dies and don't have a computer or WIFI around to check your social media accounts? Do you freak or “lose control” when you can't view your messages or see what your friends or other people are up to? Does it feel like the end of the world if you forgot your passwords?

This is actually called *social media anxiety disorder*. According to anxiety theorists, and social media developers, 20% of people with social media accounts get anxious or become fearful if they go more than three hours without checking their social feeds. It turns out that the more technology we obtain, the more stressed out and anxious we become.

Sounds contradicting right? Well, let me explain exactly what social media anxiety disorder is.

Similar to a social anxiety disorder, a social media anxiety disorder only happens if you become overwhelmed or develop an extreme sense of fear if you cannot check your account. For most people, this seems 'abnormal' and they won't get stressed or even worry about their social accounts. However, the more technology and new products that get introduced to our society, the more chances there are at developing a social media anxiety disorder. That is why I say, the more technology we have, the more stressed we are becoming.

Some signs that you or someone you know may have a social media anxiety disorder are as follows; however, not everyone with this disorder experiences every symptom:

- Interrupting, or tuning out conversations to check their social media accounts.
- Lying to yourself and others about how much time is spent online.
- Withdrawal and isolation from people you care about.
- Trying to stop your social media influence more than once without having accomplished it fully.
- Neglecting work and other responsibilities due to the constant check of *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc...*
- Experience severe anxiety when you cannot gain access to your accounts - any account.
- An overwhelming urge to share things with the world and all your friends.
- Spending more than six hours a day social networking.
- Having your phone or a technological device with you all the time only to check your social feeds, or to have it in your mind that you can access it whenever you want.

Spending too much time on the internet and checking your social media feeds, and notifications can greatly impact the way you live your life. You may lose out on job opportunities, fail to resolve conflict in your interpersonal relationships, and your education may suffer. This is because the more hours you spend online, the less time you have to work on your career, yourself, your intimate relationships, your friends, and your study.

There are many factors that play a part in social media addictions. It has been proven to cause eye strains, neck tension, and back problems. If the length of time you spend on social media is not reduced it can actually lead to obesity, heart disease, dietary problems, and an increased risk of a stroke happening. That's not all, mental health issues such as anxiety can develop as well. Other mental health issues caused by social media addiction include depression, attention hyper deficit disorder (ADHD), impulsive disorder, loneliness, and even paranoia.

The reasons for these mental health issues stem from overthinking as well; by feeling the pressure of having to share your life, and also feeling as though you are having to compare your life to other people. The competition for perfection and the way you want others to view your life becomes addictive which leads to overthinking, and constant worry. For example, you may scroll through social media and live vicariously through someone else, seeing as they have children, are married, and have a great career. While your life seems depressing because things aren't as you want them to be - perfect. However, what you must understand is no one's life is completely perfect and as envious as you may feel, the grass may not always be greener on the other side. If you are trying to show this 'picture perfect' lifestyle, chances are, someone else is doing quite the same.

The Facts

When you look at the definition of addiction, it usually refers to someone acting on their urges no matter the consequences which normally leads to negative effects. The addiction becomes a harmful habit, and the person with the addiction does anything in their power to get their 'fix'. This can greatly impact someone's performance at work,

school, and in relationships, as briefly stated above. When we look at what social media platforms, such platforms refer to websites that allow people to share parts of their lives or gets them to express themselves and engage in online social networking.

So, when you combine these two definitions you get someone who uses social media excessively without the will to reduce their habit or control their urges. It's almost as if the person cannot go an hour without having to check their online accounts. They become so involved with social media, that they know everything about everyone, and what's happening in theirs or someone else's world. When they are 'out of the loop' they become overly anxious and have spiraling thoughts of 'what's happening with this situation,' or 'I need to check in, just in case it's important.' This leads to an obsession which leads to the addiction, which then turns into a downward spiral of a full-on disorder.

The information provided is not to say that social media is bad or unhealthy. However, social media use can become unhealthy when it is abused, or overused and this is when it becomes a problem. People use social media to express their creativity and talk about themselves. These social media sites allow the user to communicate and create a sense of belonging or give someone a sense of personal purpose. The problem is not with the media sites or the actual individual, the problem is that these sites mask the opportunity to speak in person. When we don't communicate or interact face-to-face, a ton of information gets missed which can cause miscommunication and more conflict.

For example, when you talk online, you do not get to see the opposing parties posture, there is no eye contact, and you will not hear their tone of voice or feel their vibes. We assume that someone is in a bad mood based solely on their choice of words and vice-versa, when this may not always be the case - causing miscommunication which causes conflict. Finally, you guessed it, this causes the individual experiencing the misguided non-verbal interaction to overthink and then find problems that they cannot solve. The only real way to solve this type of issue is to be in person and have a conversation - if it's not too late by the time online networking has taken control of the circumstance.

This brings me to my next point that misguided information, overuse of social media, constant comparing to others and competing for the spotlight (online), can lead to an overload of anxiety. Because of social media being a mask for face-to-face interactions, it only makes sense to assume that eventually social media will be the dominant form of communication and cause of social anxiety due to the overthinking resulting from anxiety and its disorders.

What I mean by this is, the more we hide behind our devices and messages, or 'show off', the more awkward face-to-face conversations will be which will make more and more people avoid personal contact. This is because the only way we will know how to talk is through our devices, and face-to-face interaction will become extremely difficult. Hence social media and networking being more addictive and habitual, which results in social anxiety disorder becoming extremely common.

Still not sure whether or not you have an addiction? Ask yourself these following questions to get a clearer sense of if you do or not.

- How much time do I spend on social media per day?
- When I am not on social media accounts, how much extra time do I spend thinking about my conversations and profiles?
- Have I had an urge in the last twelve hours to check my social media accounts?
- Am I living envious of someone else and feeling the need to compete with them on social media sites?
- Do I use social media to avoid or forget my real-life problems?
- Have I tried to reduce my social media access, or time on it and gotten nowhere?
- Am I anxious when I have been logged off of my accounts, and cannot log back on?
- Has social media changed, or impacted my life in a negative way?

If your answers were mostly yes, then you may have a social media addiction, and should further investigate so that it doesn't become a

disorder. Remember to take a break from social media and online accounts at least one day a week to avoid the addiction from escalating. Although, if you cannot seem to do this, then speaking to a therapist about your problems with social media, may help you to find your triggers so that you can work on spending less time online, and more time with what is important such as friends and family. Remember, even though it might not be apparent at first sight, social media addiction can be indirectly linked to the habit of overthinking. That is why it can be essential in your fight against overthinking to learn how to keep excessive social media use in check.

Technology Addictions

Technology additions are the same as social media addiction except instead of being addicted to social media, you are addicted to your cool new gadgets and devices. Anything to do with technology, you know about. You are emptying your wallet constantly to get the next best thing. It has become the norm for the adolescent to play video games in their rooms, the toddler to tinker on their tablets, or the adult to be zoned into their phones. Technology is everywhere, and it is used for many reasons whether someone needs it for work and has two phones. Or, the entrepreneur needs the tablet to promote and manage their growing business. The up and coming authors spend hours typing away at their desk. Examples like these are endless and it is safe to say that technology has become an integral part of our lives. But the question is, at which point does the use of technology start being a problem?

Understanding the signs of having a technology addiction is the first step to getting the help you need to overcome it. Here are some warning signs that technology could be a problem for you:

- Always thinking about the internet or the next new item.
- Use the internet, or your device, to play games to satisfy your loneliness or depressive issues.
- Feel irritable, restless, or moody when you attempt to cut down

on device time.

- Procrastinate work and other responsibilities by being on your devices.
- Have an immediate urge to check your phone and messages instantly.
- You have **phantom vibration** ², which has you constantly check your phone.
- Ignore what's happening around you because you are too distracted by your devices.
- Have feelings of anxiety when you are away from the internet.

If this sounds too familiar, then you may have an addiction problem to your device or the internet. The problem with technology addictions is that in this generation it has become unstoppable. Everywhere you go, you will see people in groups or at restaurants and they are on their phones or showing others what's on their devices. There is no such thing as "real person" interaction anymore and the technology problem is getting out of hand. More and more parents are neglecting their parental responsibilities by handing their child a tablet or smartphone to distract their kids from asking for too much or annoying the parent. This results in behavioral problems and withdrawals when the device is taken away. The main factor here is that tech designers and device developers use tricks to trigger dopamine hormones (the feel-good hormone) and manipulate our brains to get us addicted to our devices, which extends the usage for our screen time.

Technology addiction leads to:

- Anxiety and depression
- ADHD, because it is used as a distraction
- Sleep problems
- Obesity
- Eye problems
- Damage to your hearing

This is becoming a rising problem, according to science, researchers have found that most Americans look at their smartphones at least 52-80 times a day. The daily usage of screen time and device use is roughly nine hours or more which includes texting, gaming, social media scrolling, etc... Perhaps the most distressing fact is that the average gamer (playing games at least once a day) will have 10,000 hours of logged playing time by the age of 21.

If technology addiction has become a problem for you and your family, then there are ways to reduce the activity. In short, you can start by timing or being aware of your usage during the day. Then the days and weeks following, make a conscious effort to minimize yours and your child's screen time. Notifications that aren't so important can be turned off, and create a device free area or timezone so that you can spend it doing other things like spending time with real people in the real world. It is time to start a digital detox, and only you are in control of how to go about this.

Chapter Summary

The stats and information provided in this chapter have been thoroughly researched to provide you with the knowledge for how to fix problems caused by excessive social media or technology use. Even though this chapter was solely about technology, and anxiety revolving around social media, it doesn't mean that it had nothing to do with overthinking. If you think about it, overthinking and anxiety happen when you worry excessively and overthink. As the previous chapter has stated, our limbic system crashes due to the decrease or change in the shape of the amygdala and hippocampus, the overuse of technology can greatly reshape these parts of the brain as well.

In this chapter, we learned:

- How social media affects our anxiety
- What social media anxiety disorder is
- What technology addiction is
- The physical, and mental disadvantages of the overuse of technology and social media
- What social anxiety disorder is and how it relates to over thinking and the social media crisis.

In the next chapter, you will learn how to stop overthinking. The next chapter is to get you motivated for curing your problem and moving towards a life of fulfillment and happiness. The five solutions revolve around your cluttered mind, what happens in your body, your environment, your habits and routines, and finally the toxic people you might be surrounding yourself with.

Chapter Four: The Battle for the Cure

One thing we know about overthinking is that it often develops into anxiety and has a list of symptoms that are unhealthy for an individual. If you can't sleep, use substances to quiet your thoughts, always seem tired, have the need to control everything, fear the future, worry about the past, and don't trust yourself then you are most likely an overthinker.

When you overthink, your judgments become clouded by your cluttered mind, you always seem tired or sore because of what stress does to your body, and you may feel overworked just by looking at your surroundings. If your mind is constantly busy, you will feel drained and fatigued most of the time, which makes daily chores like cleaning your kitchen seem like an impossible task. In fact, your mind has been so busy, that the reason it seems impossible to slow down is that you have allowed your brain to take over, and everything you do or see has become revolved around your overthinking, making it a habit. Finally, if that wasn't enough, now you have toxic people all around you to promote even more negative thinking and patterns you are trying to rid yourself of.

Holy cow, that's a lot. Ever think that the life you are living right now may be the reason for your overthinking disorder, worried on-the-go mind, and anxious feelings? Well, if your answer was no, it's time to change all that starting right now with this chapter.

Here are the best-researched ways to help you stop overthinking today:

1. Become aware of your thought patterns and anxious triggers

To be aware of your overthinking and anxiety triggers, you must practice mindfulness. When you are one with yourself and completely in the present moment, you become one with your thoughts as well. Allowing

yourself to become observant of your thoughts will help you define and recognize your triggers. When you are not being mindful, but have a sense of high stressful emotions that bring forth unwelcome symptoms, is when you should pause and take a moment. Think about what you were doing and what you were just thinking to bring on these emotions and anxiety symptoms. Carry a notepad with you at all times, and write down what you were doing (making dinner), what you are feeling right now (anxious), and what thoughts you were just thinking (I am so stressed, I am going to burn my dinner and the night will be ruined). As you continue to do this ask yourself certain questions like:

- a. Am I predicting the future?
- b. What exactly caused me to think and feel this way?
- c. Is there a traumatic situation that happened I can link my situation to?
- d. Am I uncertain?
- e. Am I experiencing something new?
- f. Was my last conversation stressful?

As you continue to ask yourself these questions, continue to jot down your thoughts, feelings associated with your thoughts, urges associated with your feelings, and where you were or what you were doing when this happened. You will start to notice a pattern. Within these patterns, you will define your triggers. Once you understand your triggers, the advice in this book will become easier to apply to in your life.

2. Organize your life

Life can be challenging as it is. So, when you add

unnecessary worries and thoughts to it, life becomes even more complicated and overwhelming, making room for new disasters, more mistakes, and unhealthy habits. Consider the following when trying to decrease your overthinking patterns.

- a. **Acquire a broader perspective** - Will this matter in a week to a year? By asking yourself this one simple question, it should help you realize that what you are so stressed about doesn't matter later, so there won't be any point in obsessing over it now.
- b. **Make quick, but wise decisions** - When we are faced with a bunch of choices, we tend to try to control every option which leads us to overthinking and stressing us out more than we need to be. Give yourself a time limit like five minutes for small things like what are you cooking for dinner, or what you will wear for the day. Give yourself half an hour to decide one larger decision like the theme for your child's birthday, or what you will say at your big speech.
- c. **Take mental breaks every day** - Overthinkers forget "me time," and so they constantly allow themselves to spiral when they don't get downtime. When we do have downtime is when our thoughts take over. When life is hectic and there seems to be no time in the day, make time. For ten minutes focus on just breathing, being completely aware of your breath. For twenty minutes go for a nice nature walk, or for forty-five minutes (at most) catch up on your favorite show you have been meaning to watch.

3. Practice positive affirmations regularly

Affirmations are specifically used and were created for clearing your negative thoughts. It is a tool to challenge your thoughts and replace them with positivity. Whenever you feel anxious, or start to overthink, stop yourself and either say out loud or write the positivity down. In your spare time, you can create flashcards and put it on a keychain for when you are out and about. Some examples are:

- a. "I am in control of my thoughts, they do not control me."
- b. "I am choosing to let go of my overthinking and obsessive thoughts at this moment. I will return to them later."
- c. "I refuse to believe the images or future telling thoughts, as they are unhelpful, and I cannot predict the future."
- d. I am happy, and I choose to stay this way.

4. Create a daily exercise routine

Exercise is a great way to release that pent up energy that is stored within the deep tissues of your brain. It releases healthy chemicals and develops a stronger hippocampus and amygdala. Exercise is repetitive - just like your obsessive thoughts. Instead of allowing yourself to think about things that aren't helpful, get out for a jog, or do some light yoga stretches. Or, go to the pool and sit in the hot tub after a nice swim. When you focus on what your body is doing, you don't have time to think, therefore when you go to sleep at night,

you will get some peace because you are worn out mentally and physically.

5. Always live in the moment

This task can be quite tricky for most people. It's hard to live in the present moment when there are alarming anxious feelings happening, or when you have deadlines coming up, or when your bills are overdue. The fact about living in the present moment is that you have accepted the stressors of life, and understand that they aren't going anywhere. By obsessing and stressing over them right now, you are only enabling yourself to repeat the same habits you have been exhibiting since you started overthinking. Let go of what might happen, could happen, or should have happened, and live for right now. Figure out what you can do right now, what decisions can you make at this moment to help you for a successful future? Practice mindfulness every day, and in everything that you do. The more you do, the more likely you are going to be able to relax.

Breaking overthinking habits is mainly difficult because it has become familiar, and normal for you. You are so used to controlling every aspect of your life (and others) that you don't know how to slow down and just relax. Has someone ever told you that you were uptight and just needed to let loose? Well, take a night off from life once in a while and just 'let loose'. The fact is that life will always be here. There will always be stress, and there will always be problems. It's about how you deal with the stress and problems that keep you from losing your mind.

A Cluttered Mind

Do you ever feel scatter-brained or spaced out? This may be because when you have so much going on your life and in your mind, your brain becomes tired which promotes symptoms of fatigue, exhaustion, and more burn-out. Ways that we can start to declutter our minds so we don't feel this way are as follows:

1. Journal

Writing everything down and journaling your thoughts can be a thought-release for most people. Instead of memorizing tasks that you need to do, have a to-do list on your fridge, a grocery list on your front door and in your car, and appointments written on your calendar. Your mind can become overwhelmed simply by trying to remember all of the things you need to do or have not done yet. Journaling can help with giving you a different perspective, and also re-reading what you wrote can help you look at your life from a third-person perspective.

2. Think things over and reflect

Have you ever just sat there and thought about one thing, focused on one object, or even one word at a time? If not, try this trick and try to let the other thoughts and emotions pass by. Everything you do, do one at a time. For example, wash ONE dish, then pause. Take ONE breath, then pause. Walk ONE step, and pause. Practice doing one thing at a time to give your cluttered mind a break.

3. Release your negative thoughts

This may sound repetitive, but that's because it is so

important to work on this skill. Thoughts are important to have unless they become unhealthy, unwelcomed, and overwhelming. If you hadn't purposely thought about something, and your mind develops intrusive thoughts or mental images, then it's your thoughts that are actually controlling you. The goal is to have it the other way around. So, the next time you find yourself obsessing, or worrying, or overplanning, or trying to be perfect, simply say out loud or to yourself - "Hello unwelcome thoughts, here is where I take my control back. Goodbye." Always remind yourself that you will have time to address your thoughts later and move on with your day.

There are many more techniques and information about how your mind becomes so cluttered and what you can do about it. However, for now, this was just a general overview of what you can learn and how these techniques will benefit your life.

The Wounded Body

As we have already learned, the way we think and perceive the world around us, and the stress we take on can really affect our bodies. Just a sneak peek into the sixth chapter, here is a list of things that can happen to your body:

Your Mind

- Feelings of overwhelming doom, or like you may be having a heart attack, or that something is physically wrong.
- Panic attacks, restless and ongoing thoughts
- Damage to the limbic system, and its elements (amygdala, and hippocampus).
- Depression due to too much stress and anxiety.

- Headaches from body tension and not enough exercise.
- irritability due to too many headaches caused by overthinking.

Your Chest

- An increased heart rate that never seems to slow down
 - heart problems due to constant heart racing symptom
 - heart palpitations due to anxiety and heart stress
- Breathing problems caused by overthinking and anxiety

Your Gut

- Upset stomach
- Bowel problems
- Nausea
- Loss or gain in appetite
- Hunger pains that don't go away
- Muscle tensions and aches or pains
- Decreased interest in sexual activity

Your legs

- Fatigued muscles
- Weak or shaky legs
- Restless leg syndrome
- Cramps or tendon problems
- Increase in blood pressure
- Undiagnosed or 'invisible' problems

So, how do you get rid of these symptoms? Why do they happen? What causes the body so much of this stress? How do we reduce it? It's important to know what to look out for and to realize that some physical symptoms can be caused by overthinking. In Chapter Six we will go into detail on how you can take care of your body by taking care of your mind.

Daily Habits

What seems to be a normal thing for some people seems like an exhausting task to overthinkers. For example, you are out at dinner with your significant other, and you decide to go somewhere new. It's a fancy place that serves food you have never tried before and so you are a little worried. The little worries turn into big worries, especially if what you ordered was not what you were expecting. You may spiral and let your thoughts convince you that the food is bad. You continue to eat it because you don't want to upset your spouse, and at the same time, you're trying to come up with a good excuse to leave. Does this sound about right? If you are an overthinker, the following list can seem all too familiar. Overthinkers normally:

- Ask the same questions again and again
- Overplan, and overanalyze everything
- Over-explain, and tell the long story long instead of the long story short
- Continue to reach out for reassurance, or discreetly fish for compliments
- Become distant, or different when having an internal moment
- Apologize for everything, and for no apparent reason
- Avoid people or situations that have the potential of causing discomfort
- Cannot make a decision about anything ever
- Thinking about a simple question and taking forever to answer it in a given time frame
- Have low self-esteem
- Assuming the worst at the slightest sign of trouble
- Jumping to conclusions often without properly analyzing the situation
- Making tons of lists, and remaking them until they seem good

enough, but they never are

All these are habits that can be hard to break. For example, apologizing may not mean that you are actually sorry for something, however, it has become something you just do, so you say it. Then you may stress out and wonder why you said sorry in the first place. Then you say sorry for saying sorry if the opposing party seems irritated, which only makes them more irritated. From all this overthinking about a simple sorry that never needed to be said, it's no wonder these have become unhealthy habits. So, how do we break these habits? First, we need to become aware of them, then we need to fix them, and break them one by one. Breaking bad habits is a chain of its own and we will learn how to break such corrosive habits in Chapter Eight.

Toxic People

As if you weren't your own worst enemy, you need to define the types of people in your life that are actually increasing your stress level. These people include narcissists, psychopaths, sociopaths - the three personality types that take the biggest toll on your mental health. Then you have abusive relationships which could be your spouse, family members, needy friends, your employers, and even your children. Creating strong boundaries and learning how to make difficult, yet wise decisions are how you will get away from these people. Although it may be hard for you to accept the toxicity - due to a close bond, or a family member that needs to be in your life - you have the choice to enable them or get away from them. What you need to understand is that you deserve people who love and support you no matter what. The main reason you may be keeping these people in your life results from guilt. They could be a family friend that you feel obligated to keep around. Or, they could be a friend of a friend that seems supportive but is mostly judgmental. Whatever it is, here is a list of how to tell if someone in your life is toxic:

1. The narcissist

Do you feel as though whenever you speak, the conversation is redirected to their needs or their

priorities, as if they weren't listening to you at all? This is called being around a selfish friend. Not all narcissists are selfish, but they are great conversationalists and somehow leave you feeling as though you weren't important.

2. The straight jacket friend

This type of person is controlling and can literally suck the air right from you. Do you find yourself trying to please this person, but never seem to measure up to their expectations? Do they try to have a say in what you do, say, think, and behave? Everything you do seems wrong? This puts a strain on your mental development and it will seem as though you can't do anything for yourself, increasing the negative thoughts that run through your mind.

3. The "mooch"

Everyone has that one person in their lives that take and take but forget to give back. Do you find yourself constantly saying yes to one specific individual because you feel bad for them or may feel obligated to help them? These people never have anything good to say and seem to have a very negative view of the world. From hanging out with this person, you may leave feeling blue or sad yourself. Watch out for the mooch in your friend list because they can greatly impact how you view your world as well.

4. Dramatic person

Almost everyone has drama in their lives, it's hard to

stay away from. However, do you have that one friend that cares about the drama, and no matter what they do they are either creating it or helping sustain it? These people don't know how to regulate their own emotions and act on their impulses so they stir the pot for fun and satisfaction. They are attention seekers and seem to always complain or gossip about something or someone. They can never keep a secret, and don't know the full value of a relationship. Being around these people will always make you question their intentions and actions.

5. JJ's

A JJ is a jealous-judgmental person. These people thrive on creating problems that aren't there. They hate themselves so much that they project their own faults onto others and never take the blame for what they do wrong. They feel victimized every time you try to help them and never see the flip side of things. They create problems inside your own head to get you to see things from their perspective and persuade you to feel judgmental of the less fortunate.

6. The storyteller

Whether they tell you little white lies or create a huge story to make themselves look good, these people are straight up fibbers. They may say that once they owned a fancy car, and a nice acre of land, however, you have never seen it. They may go as far as competing for stories with you to have their lives seem

better or worse than yours. These people are great at manipulation and deceiving.

7. The tank

This type of person trumps everything in their way for their own benefit. They will easily rip someone else apart if they feel as though this person has become a problem for them. For example, if you did something amazing - or have a great idea - and share it with them, they will go out of their way to complete your goal or take credit for what you told them because they are in a position to get ahead. They feel as though they deserve everything, and everyone around them is a lesser person.

If anyone popped in your head, then it's time to figure out exactly why you have them in your life. Make sure to keep these people at a safe distance if it is impossible to cut ties completely. In order to get ahead and be successful in your own life, you need to be aware of the people who serve no support or benefit to you. Consider thinking of where you would be if it weren't for them. Now picture life without them, and strive to excise them from your life or have them around much less.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we went over the various aspects you need to face in order to obtain a life free from overthinking. This was a general overview of the battle that lies in front of you and the next chapters will go in depth on how you can break overthinking once and for all. We discussed what a cluttered mind can look like, what may happen within the body physically due to overthinking, and what habits you should break to decrease your unhelpful thoughts. Also, we touched on how to pick out a toxic person in your life and promised ourselves a brighter future for when we decrease the interactions with toxic people. When you purposely work on all these aspects in your life, you should feel a whole lot better, and finally, be able to live the life you want without those pesky thinking patterns holding you back.

This chapter consisted of:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| ●What a cluttered mind is | ●How to tell what a toxic person is | ●Where in your body overthinking attacks | ●What the bad habits that control an overthinker are |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|

In the next chapter, you will learn how to break the first chain of overthinking - the cluttered mind. You will learn to spot what a cluttered mind is, and how to practice being mindful while learning the ways which can help you declutter your mind. You will also understand how you can practice prioritizing your tasks so that you can declutter your mind in the moment to set you up for a new day.

Chapter Five: Break the First Chain - A Cluttered Mind

Aside from overthinking, the reasons why your mind would be so cluttered causing you to worry all the time and keeping you up at night is because you have a negative mindset. The real questions here are, what is keeping me from having peace of mind? What is going on in my mind that is causing me to struggle with these overthinking patterns? What does it look like to finally have access to a quiet mind?

The answer is complex as it could be a number of things. First of all, your mind is cluttered with so much because you have trained yourself to obsess over even the smallest of thoughts. It could also be that you have become so overwhelmed that all you see is negative views, and you have narrowed your mind due to the experiences in your life. The truth is, when we are young we view the world as a place of creativity. When we are toddlers to teenagers (in most cases), we view ourselves with love and beauty. This is because we don't stress about bills, rent, our careers, our finances, etc.

When we are kids we may worry about things like how early our bedtime is or the rules we wish we didn't have. As we get older we start to understand why punishment and discipline were needed. Then we become adolescents and worry about things like our grades, our teachers, how popular we are, bullies, beginner relationships, friends, curfews, etc... Once we become adults and move out on our own, the world is fresh, and we are looking at it from a new perspective. We now worry about our own children, our marriage, our health, our careers and so on.

Every experience that we undergo from when we were a child shapes us to who we are today, and somewhere along the line, we have become obsessed with thinking about every decision and every choice we have made or didn't make. We worry about our future and more importantly our children's future. From small things like what to wear to big things like what to study will shape our future. Most people don't know what they are doing, they are just living on auto-pilot which then causes

questions like what's my purpose? What am I doing? Where do I want to be? Who do I want to be?

Over the years, we have developed a negative mindset based on our experiences, and with the overload of stress, we forgot how to relax and what peace felt like. So, the answer to what it looks like to finally have peace of mind is as simple and as complex as this: You are the only one who can change your mindset and shape your life by taking a good look at what has you so stressed in the first place. Can you control what happened in the past? No. Can you control your future? Only to an extent. Can you control what you do right now? Absolutely. The trick is only focusing on right now, learning from the mistakes you made and striving towards your future goals to get you unstuck in the now.

Mindfulness

The power of mindfulness is extremely important in everything you do. Throughout this book, we have talked about mindfulness and how to be more in tune with yourself through this process. The reason why being mindful is so crucial to learn and practice is because if you seriously want change in your life, everything you do should revolve around being mindful. If your negative thoughts are getting the best of you, be mindful of them. If you're obsessing about the past or the future, stay mindful of this. If your workload is too demanding and you are taking on unnecessary stress, being mindful can help you relax.

As you can see, everything you do can be associated with being completely in the present moment. If you are unaware of your actions based on your negative thoughts and results in your anxious state, then you will never be able to understand your triggers or create lasting and positive change. In short, if you want to change, you must do something different than you have done before. The first step is being more aware of it all.

What is mindfulness? It is defined as becoming more aware of yourself internally to be able to handle and address what's going on externally. There are two examples here:

Let's say it's a nice day, you woke up feeling good, your kids are behaving, your relationship is awesome, and work isn't demanding

anything of you. You are trying to enjoy the day but your mind is racing. You continue to think 'something is going to go wrong'. Or, 'I should be doing something else right now'. Then you end up twisting your thoughts with, 'what am I making for dinner? I wonder if my spouse is being silent today because they are thinking about our disagreement from last week. My kids are only being good because I was mean to them yesterday. Work hasn't called, what if something bad is going to happen? What if I get fired?' Then, your spouse asks you something or compliments you and you totally freak out on them. You might even hide in your room because now you feel bad. Or, your kids come up to you and ask you something, but your mind is so overwhelmed you now have to focus on what it is that they are asking but you cannot so you say 'ask your father/mother'. Now your thoughts spiral into 'what if that was the wrong answer'? Can you see how this is going to affect your day and your mood? Now you are feeling bad, overthinking negatively, and just want to go to sleep.

The second example - The day is horrible. Your work phone keeps ringing, your kids are acting up or misbehaving, you are arguing with your spouse, the house isn't clean, you are on the rocks with your best friend, and there is no way you can enjoy your day. Your brain goes on overload and you think, 'why does this have to happen today? Why can't my husband/wife just understand? What is wrong with my kids misbehaving like this, it's like they want to torture me. I can't focus on work with everything else and so now my boss must think very low of me. I wish I had my best friend but they are mad at me too, and I probably deserve it'. This is an overload of everything. So instead of making your day better you are making your day worse.

In the first example, you cannot enjoy your day because you are not in the present moment. Everything seems fine, but because it is fine, something must go wrong. Overthinking and being negative has put your brain into thinking like this automatically. Being mindful of these thoughts, then bringing your attention to the present moment - your day - will help you retrain your brain out of this automatic system.

In the second example, everything is a disaster. Your mind is cluttered, your life is cluttered, your stress is overwhelming, and your thoughts aren't making anything better. Being mindful of the day -

instead of your thoughts - will bring your attention to your thoughts and how you feel about them. You notice that the day is upside down, but also take note of how your thinking is relating to your day to make it worse.

The bottom line is that in any situation, you need to decide to be mindful of every moment to find your triggers. The goal of mindfulness is to be aware of your mental mind, your emotional state, and your physical surroundings in order to cope with or change the unwanted thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

Mindfulness is not about changing anything, but being aware so you can make changes. Now in order to be mindful at any moment, you need to understand and learn the basics of mindfulness on your own time. When you become good at observing yourself, you can become great at observing your life in stressful moments. Once this happens successfully, you can find ways around developing a positive attitude and finding a more healthy peace of mind by replacing where you decide to put your focus. Being mindful, and mastering mindfulness will allow you to easily put space between yourself and your reactions (mental mind to physical surroundings). Here is how to start being mindful every day:

1. Set a time to practice mindful meditation

Every day, find a peaceful time in the day and sit with yourself and your thoughts. At first you won't be focusing on your thoughts until you become more experienced. It doesn't have to be a bed, couch, cushion, or designated area, just a space where you can be with yourself. The time could be after dinner, before bed, or in the most stressful time of your day - whatever works for you.

2. Be in the present moment exactly how it is

This is easier said than done, but for now your only focus should be what is happening right now.

Quiet your mind and focus on everything that is happening around you. Start by bringing your full attention to your breath. Don't try to change it, just observe it. Next, bring your focus to your body. Do you feel warm or cold? Anxious or calm? Angry or happy? Is your heart racing? Are your fingers tingling? Don't try to change it, just be mindful of it.

3. Don't be judgmental

This step is about just noticing when your brain goes 'I feel bad, this is bad.' Or, the opposite, 'I feel happy, this is good.' Don't judge or label your heart racing as bad, or your good day as being happy. Notice when you make these judgments, make a note, and let them go.

4. Return to your present moment

When we practice mindfulness, our mind may wander and our brain will try to use this time as a thinking period. Notice your thoughts, or judgments, and return back to your breath. Don't change it, just notice it. Notice the feelings you have in your body. Notice your surroundings - What are people doing? How many colors do you see in the room? What does the air feel like? What sounds do you hear? How far away or close are they? Bring your focus back to your breath, and just breathe naturally.

5. It's okay for your mind to wander

At first, mindfulness meditation may feel impossible to achieve if you are doing it in the midst of your day. But, it doesn't require any extra mental energy to do this. Mindfulness doesn't ask you to change what you are doing. It doesn't require you to intentionally avoid your thoughts and feelings. So, when your mind has wandered once again, take note of this, remember what you are doing, then come back and finish the exercise.

The meditation should take no longer than ten to twenty minutes at a time. You can choose to do this once a day, but it is better to do this multiple times a day. The goal is to be completely comfortable sitting with yourself and observing all that is around you and what's going on inside you. As you make mindfulness a routine, you will start to develop an awareness of the triggers of your mental exhaustion and also which parts of the day you are the most distracted. When you become aware of these things, you can finally start tackling the clutter that has your mind jammed.

Declutter Your Mind - Day In, Day Out

When addressing the cluttered mind, you need to ask yourself, why does it seem so hard to focus on simple tasks like spending time with your family? This is because your mind is cluttered. But why is your mind so cluttered? In truth, your mind can think 100 times faster than you can speak. So in just thirty seconds or less, your mind has already processed a conversation, thought about what you are going to say next, and have built fifty different solutions. At least this was how it was since the beginning of time.

Now with social media and the various social platforms evolving, we have even more to think about. Have you ever sat down to focus on work at your computer, or wanted to do your finances on a chart? But,

instead, think ‘I will just check my Facebook first.’ Then once you have finished that, you see a topic that reminded you of a to-do you forgot about. Then stemming from that you start to beat yourself up because you forgot. Now you think, I should make a list of my to-do’s so I don’t forget next time, but then your list turns into a chore list, a grocery list and time passes by without you even realizing it. Suddenly, it’s time to make dinner and follow through with your night time routine, work is now just a distant memory from when you first sat down. When you return to the project you originally wanted to start with after you get everything else done, you stare at a blank computer screen and are mentally paralyzed because you have too much happening inside your mind.

Why does this happen? It’s because you are not putting space between yourself and your reactions (from mindfulness). You are not trying to focus on just one thing, instead you are focusing on everything at once. This is where some people think multitasking comes in handy, but, in fact, multi-tasking is the one thing that is stopping you from decluttering your mind. It’s like when you try to declutter your house (explained in Chapter Seven.) You will start in the kitchen, but then find dirty dish rags, so then you collect all the laundry. As you are collecting the laundry from every room, you may see that the beds haven’t been made. You are already here so why not make the beds before doing the laundry. As you are making your beds you see that the floor hasn’t been vacuumed or swept. So, you quickly finish the beds, and pull out your floor supplies from the kitchen, then realize you still haven’t done the dishes. The point is that as you go through and clean your house - in this case your mind - you are so busy focusing on everything that needs to be done that you don’t stop to slow down to do one thing at a time. Then by the end of the day, your house still looks messy and yet you are wiped.

Same thing for your mind, you have spent all day thinking about this, that, the next thing, and what color your shoes are, that by the time it comes down to the one thing you wanted to focus on, you are too exhausted. So, what do you do next? You put it off until the next day, and what happens? The same thing! By not giving yourself time to concentrate on one thing at a time, your fears, emotions, and attitude

comes out strong which serves no purpose and you end up becoming more stressed than you need to be.

What do we do about it? Two words - brain dump. A brain dump is where you transfer what's happening in your mind to something else entirely like a computer hard drive full of notes and writings, or a piece of paper. This is where journaling can come in handy. If your brain is overloaded by overthinking about everything that's going on, start journaling to just get it out. Who knows, you may feel better and have a better perspective after. As far as your long lists of things to do and accomplish, write those down too, then organize them. Eventually, you won't need to make lists or write things down, as your brain will have processed and divided things up so it is easier to focus on one thing at a time automatically. Here is how to do a brain dump:

1. Just ten minutes a day

This exercise only has to take ten minutes a day. Usually you would do this dump once the business of your day has ended, before or after mindfulness meditation, and before bed. However, you can do this anytime you want. If you feel stuck once you put your fingers to your keyboard, or your pen to your paper it's okay, just write whatever comes to your mind. Other times you may feel as though you have tons to say and do. The important note to remember here, is that you are not making any lists, you are simply just writing for ten minutes whatever pops into your head. It doesn't have to make sense, and you don't need to edit it. Make it funny if you have nothing or cannot think of anything to write, simply just write 'I have nothing to say.' The creativity will flow from there.

2. Organize your brain dump

This should be more like a mindmap. When you read

everything you wrote, take notes on the side about what you wrote. Break into categories, family related, business related, hobby related, or any other thing you think would fit. Add important dates to a calendar, as the lists grow, you will see which list is longer and which category needs the most attention. When you can take a look at this from a distance, you will be able to figure out which needs to be thought about now, and which can be thought about in the near future, thus relaxing your mind and creating a less stressful environment for you.

3. Make to-do lists about your ideas

Is there anything in that brain dump that gave you ideas? Or did you write down ideas that you were stressing about? After brain dumping on paper, you can set your ideas up in a to-do list which will have you more prepared for the next day, instead of feeling rushed. When looking at your to-do lists you can figure out if they are absolutely needed, what needs to be done now, and what can be saved for later. Get out a planner, and write down your lists and things you need to do then start writing them in the days you plan on doing them.

Here is an example of what a braindump would look like for a mother with a husband, two kids and an assistant manager position at work - she is also an overthinker:

The clothes didn't get washed today, the kids were misbehaving, my husband seems to have no time for me and I am losing control. I have so much to do at work, that I don't even know where to start. I wish I had time to spend with my loved ones, and have an awesome performance at work, while also focusing on

my scrapbooking skills. It feels as though I will never have time to take a photography class when our bills are piling up, and the demands of life are overwhelming. I don't think I am strong enough to continue fighting every day as if it were my last because I can't handle being a mom and a wife, while doing great at what I do. I need a vacation. My best friend won't talk to me because she says I am bossy or angry most of the time. So now I have no one to talk too. Our cupboards are getting low, and me and my hubby mostly fight about what we are going to make for dinner and who's turn it is. How will I ever have the time to do what I love, while being a supermom, and spending more time with my husband? Tasks at work are piling up like making a work schedule for people. I have a deadline for this new project in a week. I haven't started my project because of my home life. We have an overdue bill of \$100 dollars for the internet, and \$200 for hydro. I don't get paid for another two weeks, and my husband gets paid this Friday in four days.

This example may not be like your piece of work, but you get the point. Now, the next step is to categorize and organize your thoughts. So, with this example, she talks about how she doesn't have enough time for family, she wants to do her own things like photography and scrapbooking. She is behind on her bills and has overwhelming tasks at work to complete. Her list may look a little like this:

Family	Friends	Hobbies	Work	Finances
Kids	Best friend	Photography	Project due	\$100 internet bill
Husband	Others	Scrapbooking	Paid in two weeks	\$200 Hydro Bill
Home life				Cupboards are draining
Chores				
Vacation				

Your list will look different, but for the sake of the example, this is what her list will look like. Now, she will have to grab her calendar and her to-do task book and start making lists and adding dates. The longest part of this list seems to be family, but there are other tasks that are daunting and need to be completed beforehand. What are the most important and time sensitive issues here? Work and finances. So, she would write the due date of her project on a calendar, then when she

and her husband get paid. After that she would pull out another piece of paper and figure out the couple's finances and which goes where. Now she would see if there was any money to be saved to put towards one of her hobbies, scrapbooking or photography. After these lists and calendar dates were created she would then look at it as a whole. Which days does she have time for her best friend, and which days can she be dedicated to her family? After this is done, she would then make a list for what she needs to do the next morning. After viewing her successful dates and to-do's she can now put her plan into action and start making her life less stressful.

The point of this exercise is to show you that the less clutter you have in your mind, the more time you can actually spend living your life. When you practice brain dumping alongside mindfulness, you won't feel overwhelmed and, thus, your thoughts will not be as troubling. However, when you do this exercise, make sure you are focusing on this one thing. If anything else shall pop in your head while doing the lists and writing dates, go back to the first step and just add it into your entry. When you put focus into what you are doing today and also looking forward to brain dumping tonight, you will have made this into a routine. Once this becomes a routine, all of the things that stress you out during the day can be worked into your brain dump-mindmap, which will set you up for a better future in managing your days.

General Rules for a Decluttered Mind

In the last section we talked about decluttering your mind in the evening so you can set tomorrow - and your future - up for a refresh. This part of the chapter will discuss ways for you to declutter your mind in general. Below is a list of the ways you can declutter your mind so that you can stop feeling stressed, accomplish more, and make wiser decisions.

1. Let go of the past

As we have learned, anxiety and feeling overwhelmed occur because we worry too much about the past. I cannot repeat this enough - let go of all that is out of

your control. This is way easier said than done, but the main reason why people will try to control what is out of their hands is because they have developed perfectionism. Everything must be perfect, there is no room for mistakes. Our minds are so busy as it is, that by thinking this way, you are actually just causing more havoc in your mind. Accept what is (practicing mindfulness), let go of what was (things you can't control), and be aware of who you are (you are not superman/superwoman.) Mistakes are to be made as a way for us to learn and grow. So let go of what happened and be in the now to help you understand what you can do for the future.

2. Stop multitasking

I briefly explained in the last section that multitasking doesn't get you anywhere. When you are multitasking, you may think or believe that it will help you get things done faster. This is not the case, or the result as you may have noticed. Instead, multi-tasking will get little things done, and actually have you behind on the things you actually need to get done. When you are behind, you are more stressed which results in more overthinking. Sometimes it may be difficult not to multitask, like if you are planning your child's birthday, and you have kids coming up to you, and a cake to light, or whatever to attend to. On these hectic days be okay with being scatter-brained, sometimes you just can't help it. On the days that you can control

it, just be focused on one thing. Look at your to-do list and tick off each task as you do it.

3. Be decisive

The opposite of being decisive is when your mailbox is so full of mail, that you just don't know what to do with it so you leave it there, watching it pile up. This actually adds to your stress and should be dealt with. If you have bills, put them in a bill box. If you have letters that you are keeping for future reading, put that in an archive box. If you have work requests, put that in a work box. Make some time to go through these boxes and deal with them one at a time. The bills and finances, you could go over with your spouse (if you have one). The work stuff, you could talk to your boss or co-workers about, and your future reading material can be read on your downtime. Be decisive about what you will do with the immediate mail, and pick a time to address the other stuff.

4. Put your routine on 'Auto-Pilot'

The little stuff matters, although it can really take up much of the space and energy in your brain to focus on other things. These things may include deciding breakfast or meals during the day, what you're going to wear, when you will have enough time to relax, etc... Get these small tasks and routines out of your head by setting them on auto-pilot. By auto-pilot, I mean the little things you do without even realizing. When you understand and recognize that these things will get

done no matter what, then you don't need to think about them as much. This should help clear the way to help you focus on bigger decisions.

5. Prioritize

This last task is much like the previous recommendation. It includes making a list of all that needs to be done, and once written, forgetting about it because you have already made time for it. The reason prioritizing our tasks is so beneficial is because when we see what needs to be done at a glance, we can see what is most important and what needs to come first.

Once we get that out of the way we need to make time for relaxation, so add this as a priority as well.

Mental clutter is such a problem because it makes us rush. It gives us the state of mind that things need to be done right now. It can really get in the way of our lives and stop us from making healthy decisions for us and for our children. When our minds are full of this task and what to do about that task, we don't have much space left for other things like enjoying life. Remember that life is not to be rushed, but about taking the time to live. Start living by following what's been said in this chapter and get familiar with what more there is to come.

Chapter Summary

This chapter is the start of you getting out of your head with the everyday stresses that you have and doing something about them. It's the first chain you have to break in order to obtain your freedom. We learned that if you cannot focus on the now by being mindfulness then you cannot learn how to tackle the important tasks that need to be completed in a calm and structured manner. Mental clutter can damage your relationships and slow your performance at work. Your goal is to stop this, and so that is what this chapter was about.

In this chapter, we learned:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| ●How to be mindful | ●How to dump brain | ●Other things you can do to declutter your mind | ●Why our minds are even cluttered | ●How to solve the clutter once and for all. |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|

In the next chapter - *Chapter 6: Break the Second Chain: A Stressed Mind is a Stressed Body* - you will learn how stress and overthinking can affect your body and the many ways you can overcome feeling fatigued. You will learn how to improve your mental state through exercise and diet. By staying healthy physically, you can stay healthy mentally.

Chapter Six: Break the Second Chain - A Stressed Mind is a Stressed Body

When you overthink, you literally overthink not just your mind into exhaustion but your body into enervation. This much stress on the body can leave you with serious health defects. Your risk of mental health problems and feeling older than you are greatly increases. If you don't already, you will feel as though no matter what you do, you are constantly sore and achy. Only a few types of stress cause this, and overthinking is one of them. You may go from having slight headaches to experiencing chronic headaches. If you don't already have muscle tension, it will be as if your muscles always feel stiff. Even worse than that, your chest and heart may even feel tight. Unfortunately, you can actually develop heart problems in the future due to your high levels of overwhelming stress. The good news is that you can turn this all around starting right now. Deep breathing learned through meditation, taking mindful nature walks, jogging or running, and eating a healthy diet that suits your needs are all examples of what you can do to decrease the stress that overthinking causes.

If you don't learn to reduce your stress the following list is what you will have to look forward to. Stress causes:

- **Inflammation in the body leading to:**

- ☐ Heart disease
- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Multiple sclerosis

- **Digestive tract which includes problems like:**

- ☐ Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- ☐ Inflammatory bowel disease
- ☐ Acid reflux

- **Immune system crashes which can cause:**

- ☐ Increased chances of illness

- Always having or developing the flu or cold
- Linked to mental disorders such as:**
 - Depression
 - Mood disorders
 - Anxiety
 - Bipolar
 - Borderline personality

While overthinking doesn't cause death - nor is it linked to specific diseases - it is closely connected to serious illnesses. This is only because most people will try to combat their overthinking and excessive and unwanted thoughts with drinking, smoking, and destructive eating habits. If you inhabit this type of lifestyle as a way to cope, then the above symptoms greatly increase your chances of developing them.

How Physical Activity Helps You Manage Stress on the Body

Remember Chapter Two, in which you learned about what goes on in the parts of your brain to send hormonal signals to other parts of your body to act a certain way? That was called the limbic system and inside the limbic system there was a region of the brain called the hypothalamus which was responsible for activating hormones to help your body 'fight or flight.' The hypothalamus also sends feel good hormones in your body which you don't get unless you exercise and eat healthy. When you run, jog, learn a sport, or do anything that keeps you active, the hypothalamus feeds your body endorphins which are the 'feel good' hormones we talked about. Don't worry, you don't have to be an athlete or a 'gymaholic' to gain the benefits of being active. So, how does exercise relieve stress and help you to stop overthinking automatically?

- It increases your endorphin surges** - Endorphin rushes will help you feel good about yourself and increase the pep in your step every day that you follow the routine. You don't have to do

a full on run, or hike the highest mountain, or even spend hours in the gym. It only takes about ten minutes into your exercise to get your blood flowing and about ten to twenty minutes after that for a full on endorphin surge. So, in reality just thirty minutes a day of exercise and you are good to go.

● **It's a meditation technique** - Meditation keeps you calm and at ease and so when you get enough exercise ('enough' being thirty minutes at a time), you will find that your concentration is not on your mind or daily stress. It is on the task at hand like running, swimming laps, or playing tennis that afterwards you feel refreshed because you have flushed out the negative energy that had built up. This means more time for your family and friends and better performance at work.

● **It is a mood booster** - This goes without saying that endorphins instantly change your mood. But, I am not just talking about a quick fix, in fact exercise has you staying happy and relaxed all the time. Those tense muscles won't be from stress rather from your exercise. The only way to overcome that is to take nice long showers and exercise more with a day or two break. However, the point is you will find that you have more confidence because you feel in shape, and your depression and anxiety will feel as though they are distant relatives that don't knock often. With these two main problems gone (or almost gone) how can you worry?

The reason most people don't exercise is because they want the benefits without actually doing the work it takes to get them. Another reason may be that exercise is too hard, or it hurts, or they can't because of their weight. The thing about exercise is that you are not going to just one day wake up and be able to run a marathon. You have to slowly and gradually build into the routine which roughly takes two weeks. If

running makes your legs hurt, start smaller like doing bike riding or stair stepping. If working out makes you dizzy, lower the weight and take a seat. You have to start small before you can build up. Don't look at exercise like it's a chore, look at it like it's an opportunity. Eventually you will find an exercise that you love, then add it to your calendar and to-do lists. Finally, stick with it. Whether you jog in the morning before your shower and work routine, or you get a stretch in at lunch for twenty minutes, or you play an evening sport like tennis with your friends after dinner. Make it a habit that you exercise. The more you enjoy the exercise the better off you will be at sticking to it.

How a Healthy Diet Decreases Stress Resulting from Overthinking

If you are stressed you may do one of two things when it comes to your diet and nutrition. Either you will starve yourself and only eat when absolutely necessary, or you will binge and eat everything in sight, but only the bad things. Both of these ways of eating are very detrimental to your mental and physical health. It is most certain that worry and anxiety are closely connected to what you feed yourself. Foods high in sugar, high carbohydrate content, and with lots of sodium have your mood and energy fluctuating so much that it is no wonder you can't think.

A healthy diet consists of getting enough vegetables, fruit, and protein, and also requires that you limit your processed food intake. Processed foods have added ingredients that are hard for the body to digest. Important vitamins and minerals are removed and salt and sugar content is highly increased. Vegetables and fruit are packed with natural antioxidants - vitamins and minerals that your body needs to survive and be healthy. Whole grain foods include things like crackers, brown and wild rice, quinoa seeds, plain oatmeal, and hulled barley. Grain has the fiber content you need to stay regular and provide you with B vitamins that are crucial to sustaining energy and serotonin in your brain. Protein includes legumes, nuts, tofu, seeds, fish, seafood, poultry, and red meat. Other protein foods include cheese, kefir and fat yogurts. Protein keeps your bones strong - like calcium - and helps you

repair your muscles after an intense workout. When it comes to something to drink, you should aim for water. Water is the main course for what our body intake is as we are 80% water. Juices and other drinks such as coffee, fruit juice, and soft drinks have no nutritional value and are often loaded with sugar which will leave you feeling burnt out sooner rather than later.

Vitamins and minerals are also needed in your diet as they give your brain an extra boost, and also help you think clearly. There are two types of vitamins - water soluble and fat soluble. You must be more careful about the fat soluble vitamins over the water ones because fat stays in your body longer, whereas water is more disposable. Fat soluble vitamins are stored in the body's cells and if you take too much it could become toxic to your health.

The water soluble vitamins include:

- **Vitamin B1 (Thiamine)** - It is important for nerve function and brain stimulation. Vitamin B1 is found in pork, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds.
- **Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)** - It is needed to help balance the metabolism, increase vision health and skin health. Riboflavin can be found in foods such as milk and milk products, leafy greens like lettuce, and whole grain cereals and breads.
- **Vitamin B3 (Niacin)** - This vitamin balances metabolism and is important for the nervous system, digestive tract, and skin health. You may find this vitamin in meat, poultry, fish, whole grain breads, vegetables like mushrooms and asparagus, and peanut butter.
- **Folic acid** - Essential for producing new cells and DNA and increasing the red blood cells. You can find folic acid in foods such as leafy greens, legumes, seeds, orange juice, and liver.
- **Vitamin B12 (Cobalamin)** - Important for nerve function and increasing the health of your limbic system. Vitamin B12 can be

found in Meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, milk and milk products.

- **Vitamin C (Ascorbic acid)** - Is an antioxidant essential for the immune system health and absorbs iron. Vitamin C can be found in all fruits and vegetables high in citrus including, strawberries, oranges, cantaloupe, cabbage, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, lettuce, papayas, mangoes, and kiwi.

Fat soluble vitamins include:

- **Vitamin A** - Is needed for vision, skin health, bones and teeth growth, and immune system functionality. You can find Vitamin A in fortified milk, cheese, cream, butter, eggs, liver, leafy dark green vegetables, and dark fruits. These fruits are apricots, cantaloupe and apples.
- **Vitamin D** - It may be difficult to get enough Vitamin D in your diet, so if this is the case, try finding a multivitamin supplement with Vitamin D in it or just a Vitamin D supplement on it's own. It helps absorb calcium stored in bones and increases your mood. You can find Vitamin D in egg yolks, liver, fatty fish. When you are exposed to the sun, you are also getting your daily dose of Vitamin D.
- **Vitamin E** - This vitamin is an antioxidant that protects cell walls. You can find it in plant oils such as soybean, corn, cottonseed, and safflower. It is also found in leafy green vegetables, wheat germ, whole grains, liver, egg yolks, nuts and seeds.
- **Vitamin K** - This is needed for proper blood clotting purposes. It can be found in leafy green vegetables such as kale, collard greens, and spinach. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, asparagus also have high levels of Vitamin K.

There are two groups of **minerals** that are important for proper body functioning. One group is called 'major' or macrominerals and are needed in larger amounts than the other group which are called 'trace' minerals.

Macrominerals are:

- **Sodium** - Sodium is needed for fluid balance, nerve transmission, and muscle contraction. You can find salt in table salt, soy sauce, processed foods, milk, bread, vegetables, and unprocessed meat.
- **Chloride** - Needed to develop healthy stomach acid and balance fluids and can be found in everything that includes high sodium foods.
- **Potassium** - Needed for fluid balance, muscle contraction, and nerve transmission and can be found in meat, milk, fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains and legumes.
- **Calcium** - Calcium is crucial for healthy bones and teeth, help the relaxation of muscles, blood clotting and regulation, and boosts immunity. It can be found in milk, canned fish, broccoli, and legumes.
- **Magnesium** - Magnesium boosts immunity and is needed for making protein. You can find magnesium in nuts, seeds, legumes, leafy greens, vegetables, seafood, chocolate, and water.

Trace minerals include:

- **Iron** - Iron is found in the molecule of red blood cells responsible for carrying oxygen in the body. Iron also balances metabolism and can be found in red meat, fish, poultry, seafood, egg yolks, dried fruit, dark leafy greens and fortified cereals.
- **Selenium** - Is a strong antioxidant that helps the body fight off bad bacteria. It is found in foods such as meat, seafood, and grain.

- **Copper** - Is needed for iron metabolism. Copper can be found in legumes, nuts, whole grains, organ meat and water.
- **Zinc** - Is an important mineral needed for making protein, heals wounds, boosts fetal development, produces sperm, and boosts immunity. Can be found in foods such as meats, poultry, leavened whole grains, and vegetables.
- **Chromium** - Is linked with insulin and helps regulate blood sugar levels. It can be found in liver, brewer's yeast, whole grains, nuts, and cheese.

These are just some of the main minerals needed.

A word of caution, any excess in vitamins or minerals can also have detrimental effects on your body so you should do your research and talk to a doctor before deciding to take any supplements. Always be honest about your problems when talking to your doctor. That way you can ensure that you get the recommendation which is best suited for you.

Vitamin and mineral supplements should never replace an actual food diet. The people who most need a vitamin supplement are those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, have a drug or alcohol problem, and the elderly. Remember, vitamins are not to be taken without the advice of a doctor or dietician as they are compounds that are consumed by the body in small amounts for numerous metabolic processes.

Chapter Summary

When your mind is stressed due to overthinking everything, your health may greatly suffer. As a result of this, you may feel tired more often, have a hard time sleeping, develop extreme symptoms of anxiety and suffer from some sort of mood disorder. People low in what they need, have low levels of serotonin chemicals and endorphin hormones that keep them from being motivated to do anything. So, when your mind is stressed, your body is bound to be stressed. In this chapter you learned:

- How physical activity helps you manage stress.
- How physical exercise can get you to develop endorphin which is needed to feel good.
- How exercise actually increases your overall health.
- How a healthy diet can leave you feeling better and more motivated.
- What a healthy diet consists of.
- The importance of vitamins and minerals, and what they are.

In the next chapter, you will learn how to develop a minimalist lifestyle to decrease your stress. Oftentimes our surroundings have our brains on overload and cause us to overthink. When your house is happy, you may find that so is your mind.

Chapter Seven: Break the Third Chain - Minimize your Surroundings

Oftentimes, what holds our minds back from thinking rationally is all the clutter we keep in our homes. This may sound silly to you, but if you think about it, it's not so far fetched. A busy home makes for a busy mind. This is because even though you're not consciously aware of the clutter, even the slightest bit of junk lying around can make your subconscious mind think too much. For example, have you ever had a super busy day, and you didn't get done all that you wanted to get done? Finally, you sit down to relax and see the table beside your couch cluttered with magazines, cords, books, clothes, or little trinkets just lying there. Then you sigh and think, I was meaning to deal with that. You quickly let go of the thought because you are so tired from your day but now it's on your mind taking up subconscious space. Now, you totally forget the next day, and as you are eating dinner with your family, you see in the kitchen closet a bunch of trinkets lying around creating another mess to worry about. Then you think, 'oh I will just close the closet door,' but when you open that closet again, you are reminded once again of your cluttered space and mind by the incessant mess you can't seem to get a handle on.

The truth of the matter is, is that over time people accumulate more than they need and stuff they are never going to use again. So, why do they keep it? They keep things because they are either too lazy to deal with it, don't have enough time, or have this false belief that one day they will use it and that day never comes. Do something right now. Close your eyes and picture all of the places in your home that are cluttered. This could be behind the couch, underneath your bed, the tops of your closet, in your bathroom shelves, junk drawers in the kitchen, kids rooms, etc... Now think of it as completely gone. How do you feel with the clutter there as opposed to it gone? I bet you feel a whole lot better. The clutter of your home and living with less is possible, it frees up space in your home, in your life, and in your mind. This clean uncluttered lifestyle is called **minimalism**.

Minimalism is about living with only the necessities. Some people when they hear the word minimalism, they think they have to rid their lives of all they have accumulated and gained to live with very little. This is not true. Everyone knows what is the most important things in their lives, and so it is up to them to deal with and get rid of the unnecessary things. For example, when we look at one room at a time, we can start to see which is important and needed, and which is not. So, for the kitchen, most people may have seven bowls, seven plates, seven cups, ten knives, forks, spoons, and a truckload of plastics and trinkets they don't need. If you have a family of four, you should only need four of everything, plus one or two extras. When it comes to plastics, sort out which have lids and which don't, the unnecessary plastic containers are just taking up space that could be used for other things, so recycle those. Once we go through each of our rooms in our homes, and rid ourselves of the extra baggage that we have carried around, we can finally start to say that we are living the minimalist lifestyle.

The Benefits of Minimalism

Did you know that clutter can greatly affect your mental health? Could this be the reason for your constant overthinking? For argument's sake, let's just say all of your overthinking had a large impact on the way that you were living - the way your house is cluttered. And, all it took was to go through and rid your home of all the things that weren't necessary or held no purpose to you and that was the answer to fix your overthinking. If this isn't the case, then okay we can live with that, but what if it was?

Now, why do I say this? Because clutter in our physical surroundings has been linked to mental illness for decades and that's because we have accumulated all these things that hold triggers or distractions to us. Living as a minimalist gives you the opportunity to throw out all those things that are unnecessary and also the old memories that you don't want to keep anymore. So, don't be afraid to host a garage sale, donate old clothes, throw out baby toys. Go through your whole house because now is the time to downsize!

Here are just a few reasons minimalism is super beneficial to your health.

1. Peace of mind

Having a cluttered space makes our minds overstimulated which keeps our minds busy and results in overthinking. When we try to meditate or be mindful, overstimulation of our surroundings can make us have great difficulty focusing. Someone who is prone to schizophrenic episodes can be triggered by having too much stuff in their immediate physical surroundings. A minimalist lifestyle will decrease these episodes and help bring on concentration and peace of mind.

2. Self discovery

Instead of looking at getting rid of your things as a bad thing or that you may be losing a big part of your life, look at it like you are actually finding yourself. This happens by getting rid of things you have maybe packed around for years that have no importance to you. You may feel enlightened about who you were when you had these things to who you are now, which results in self-discovery.

3. Brings focus to what is most important

As things start to slowly disappear (the things you are not using and don't need), your mind will be able to focus on the things you now need more of and also what you could or should be doing. Aren't you tired of spending countless hours cleaning clutter that always ends up in the same place anyways? With all the extra

space from ridding you of things you don't need, you will be able to replace the space with things you do need. Also, your mind will feel freer because you will see as you remove clutter from the physical surroundings, you will also be removing worry and distraction from your mind. With more space in your home, you will be able to focus your mind on doing things that are most important, like starting a hobby or hosting events at your place. This will bring a sense of accomplishment.

4. More space to slow down and relax

The more your living space is decluttered, the more relaxed you will feel because your environment and surroundings are clear and there won't be so many distracting messes. This will make your home feel more welcome and 'homey' thus resulting in a clearer state of mind so that you can relax and unwind after a busy day. With the empty space you can now leave room for decoration and make your home more enjoyable to live in. Who knows, maybe you will want to decorate your walls with creations of your own. Creating your own art and displaying it reduces levels of cortisol thus resulting in a relaxed mind and body.

5. Creates self-control and self-discipline

There may be a bunch of your stuff that you have become attached to, but is unnecessary to you in your life. By ridding yourself and your life of these belongings, you are teaching yourself control and

discipline. It's okay if you can't get rid of it yet, in the next section of this chapter I will explain exactly how to minimize your overwhelming surroundings. A huge part of mental illness or overthinking disorder is feeling as though you are not in control. By going through the various rooms in your home, purposely getting rid of 'junk' you will be in control of what to get rid of, what to keep, and what to do with it in general. It can be difficult to continue with this lifestyle as time goes on and you accumulate more things but if you do a monthly sweep, you will teach yourself discipline that can help you with other things in your life down the road.

You can start slow with minimalism and just rid your house of garbage, and prepare for your first garage sale or donation box, while you keep other things that you think are important. But the point of minimalism is to live with only what you use and need the most. As you have read above, minimalism holds many benefits for your physical and mental health. Minimalism can also help you save money as you become more mindful of what you purchase and what you don't. Your new home theme will be less is more, and so when you bring home unnecessary items, you will start to feel unaccomplished, which will actually set you up for making healthier decisions next time. Minimalism does not have to be hard, find out how you can start in the next section of this chapter.

Start Living as a Minimalist

If you have lived with a bunch of 'stuff' all your life, it may be quite difficult for you to transition to the minimalist lifestyle. Though minimalism may seem like a big deal, it is not. You don't have to get rid of anything that you don't want to and you don't have to throw out everything right away. Starting this minimalist life may have you overwhelmed and so you put it off because there is just so much of

everything and it may seem as though you have no idea where to start. Don't worry, start small and add up as you go and you will feel more and more comfortable. A few things you should keep in your mind about minimalism as you go are to make clear reasons why you want to do this:

- You want to clear your mental clutter.
- See your spending habits.
- View a different way of living.
- Be okay with change.
- Be aware of yourself and your life to make the necessary changes that you need.

As long as you keep this clear mindstate, you will have no problems with continuing down this new journey. So, there is just one last question to ask - how do I start? Start slow, clear one room at a time, do not overwhelm yourself, and finally make minimalism a daily habit to turn it into a lifestyle. So, let's start:

1. Be clear about your intentions

Understanding why you are doing this will make your success rate greater. Making a big change like this can leave you feeling sad and stressed, however this is only temporary, so if you keep your intentions in mind during the process, it should move you forward. After everything is said and done, if you don't keep your intentions clear, it can be easy to fall back into the same habits thus living the same unhealthy lifestyle as you did before. Some of your reasons for living this lifestyle are:

- a. You want to save money, or get yourself out of debt.
- b. You wish to have more space and freedom in your home.

- c. You wish to spend more time with your family without the excess baggage.
- d. You want to feel more at peace with yourself and your surroundings.
- e. You want to stop overthinking, and clutter adds to that.
- f. You want a healthy change.

Your list may look very different, however whatever your reasons for living simple may be, write them down so that when you start to have feelings of doubt you can return to this list as a healthy reminder.

2. Start with one room at a time

The second step is to pick a room. It could be any room. It may be that you want to start with all the closets first or maybe the laundry room. It could be the kitchen or the kids rooms. Whatever you choose, pick one, focus on it, and don't go on to something different until it's complete. At the beginning of your process, it may seem as though you have a lot of work ahead of you, and you do. To not get overwhelmed or distracted, sticking to one room or closet at a time will be your best bet. When you are in a room, look at it from a third person perspective or get a friend to come over and help. Stick to one corner, one dresser, one drawer, one thing at a time.

3. Create a system

For this step, you may want to buy yourself some big totes in order to keep this process as organized as possible. For some people, figuring out what to get rid of can be a hard task, so you are going to need a

system to stick with. Make three boxes, totes, or even just piles or bags and label them. One box for keep, one box for donation, and one box for throw away. Once you throw something in the boxes, do not go back and think about putting it somewhere else. This takes patience and discipline, but know that you are in control.

4. Don't use paper

Living with less means no more paper. Instead of letters - if you still do that, send emails. Mail that comes in needs to go to a specific file folder or drawer - just make sure it's not going to just sit there. Any other type of mail can be shredded and recycled. This doesn't mean you have to go completely paperless, just learn to be mindful regarding your paper usage.

5. Spend on adventures, not objects

What I mean by this, is that when you are shopping for a birthday present or something for yourself, make sure it will be worth it. Instead of buying someone a card or flowers, print out a picture and buy a frame. The goal is to aim for things that are memorable and won't be forgotten. For yourself, think about the clothing you are holding and figure out where you would wear it, how many times you would wear it, and what it would suit most with. If it's a new car, make sure that your other car actually needs to be replaced before just spending irrationally.

6. Replace things, don't add to the clutter

Once you have finished going through the rooms in your house and have stuck to the system, it is time to start thinking about the minimalist lifestyle. So, when you are going out, make a list of the things you need not want. Then figure out what needs to be replaced. Your spending should look like you are throwing something out, and then replacing that item so you don't add to your stuff, and you're not losing anything either. You are keeping a happy balance. While you are resisting the urge to buy the things, you will probably find things that you want. Think about such items this way - I am going to wait two weeks, if I still want it at the end of two weeks, I will reassess my situation.

7. Start a meal plan

Food waste is a big problem in the US and other parts of the world. Food gets wasted because there isn't a plan in order about when you will use the food and how you're going to use it. Start by planning three days out of seven, then add up to five days out of seven, and you may find that you actually save on money. Also, you will find that your food will last longer than if you were spontaneous about it. Start by looking in a recipe book, picking your meals, and writing the ingredients, then add it to your grocery list.

8. Adopt a minimalist mindset

When you adopt a minimalist mindset, you are too

busy thinking about the necessary items, and the most important things to buy or accumulate, that you won't have the energy to think about anything else. Unless it's important. It's the state of mind that if you need it, you will still need it in a few weeks. If you forget about it, then you must have not needed it to begin with.

Eventually this will turn into a habit, which will then become a way of life, and it won't be so hard.

When you adapt to a minimalist lifestyle, you will find as though you have more freedom and spare time on your hands to do more things. This is because you aren't wasting your days chasing down items or cleaning your house all the time. When you don't have anything to pick up, then you have the energy to do more. Every purchase you make, you will be able to think twice about. Every dime you spend will seem as easy as pie when you practice minimalism. You will see that your bank adds up and you will feel much more relaxed as you scan your house of all the items you used to have that no longer bother you. This also adds free time and creates a sense of peace and serenity in the mind. No more overthinking - imagine that.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we introduced what a minimalist lifestyle looks like. You learned that not only is your overthinking a problem for mental illness, but having all sorts of mess scattered around your home can actually trigger more overthinking. Decluttering the mind, and the home are sure fire ways to start living a healthier life. By implementing minimalism, you will feel like a whole new you, it's getting rid of the old and developing a new change. Metaphorically speaking, it's ridding your soul of unnecessary garbage and becoming a completely new being.

To recap, you learned:

- The benefits of minimalism.
- How to start getting rid of things.
- The importance of a minimalist lifestyle.
- How overthinking and clutter are connected.
- How to continue living with less.
- What minimalism actually means as opposed to what people say it is.

In the next chapter, you will learn how overthinking has become a habit and what you can do to break this habit. You will learn the importance of creating a schedule and sticking to it. You will also learn how to be organized and how to turn those pesky negative thoughts into positive ones and the power of what positivity feels like. Learn how to be inspired and feel empowered to live better while ridding your life of negative habits that are unhealthy.

Chapter Eight: Break the Fourth Chain - Bad Habits

Habits by definition, are things you do every day to the point where it becomes automatic or second nature to do them. It takes about sixty six days to create a new habit and about twenty one days to break one. So, when you think about overthinking, think about how many days you have done it to make it habitual. The start of creating a habit is to create a daily routine while introducing the new habit that you want to take its place and sticking to it every day for two months and longer. Now, sticking to a daily routine means that you need to build structure in your life and with structure comes healthy decision making. But, you can't make healthy decisions without your thoughts getting in the way and so what's needed first is to develop a new thought pattern and make that a habit first. So, where do you start? Let's start with positive thinking and work from there.

Making Positive Thinking Habitual

Positive thinking habits are more than just thinking of something and being positive about it. It's also about learning what is negative in your life - whether it be your thoughts, your career, your home life, your relationships, etc... Then looking at the negatives in a non-judgmental way and finding the lesson from them. For example, say you are a painter, and had a disagreement with your friend about which colour to paint the outside trim of their house. You think it should be red and your friend thinks it should be white. You explain your reasons for why it should be red and your friend still disagrees with you because their reasoning is that it's their house. The whole interaction gets blown out of proportion and you either lose your friend, or you are asked not to paint it anymore. Your mind might go into catastrophe mode and think that your friend has a bad sense in color, or you may have stepped over boundaries a bit too far and are in regret about the whole situation. Now, look for the positives, here are a few suggestions:

- Looking back, you now have a sense of what your friend was interested in.
- You learned that arguing your point, just because you think it was better, got you nowhere.
- You have learned from this valuable lesson and will improve your interactions in the future.
- If you guys are not friends anymore, then it just means that not everyone can get along.
- You know what you like, and you stood for what you thought was right at the time.

Positive thinking can get you further than thinking negatively about it. If you were to continue to obsess over the whole ordeal, you may not learn anything and you would have made the same mistake in the future losing even more friends. There is always something brighter to look at then to dwell on the negative aspects of everything.

When you can think more positively, you will set yourself up to see things more clearly which only starts with positive inner self-talk. Right now, your thoughts may be automatically negative because that is why you overthink all the time, ruminating on things that bring you down. Negative self-talk keeps you feeling less confident and showing less self-esteem, which others may take advantage of because they know your weaknesses. So, how do you make positivity into a habit?

1. Determine the areas in your life you want to change

This step is about looking at everything from work, interpersonal relationships, certain trigger situations, certain topics brought up in conversation, etc... Then to be mindful of how you automatically react to these events or scenarios. If your spouse says they need to talk to you, and you automatically think 'oh no, what now', this thought process is going to have your mind

spiral down into a black hole where it will be hard to get out of. The minute you have this thought, notice it, then change it. Instead of 'oh no,' be curious and think 'I have a feeling I know what they want to talk about, but I am going to take this talk as an opportunity to work on my listening skills and communicate my needs too.' This way, you have noticed your thought process and changed it, which stops the downward spiral of overthinking.

2. Check yourself

If it has become habitual for you to think negatively, then you are going to view the world as negative resulting in overthinking and a distressed mood. Periodically throughout the day, stop for a minute and be mindful of what you are thinking. Since you are doing this purposely you may not have anything going on, and so purposely present yourself with something positive you can say about what you are doing at that moment. If your thought is negative, put a positive spin on it such as turning 'I'm not going to do better than I am at this,' to 'I will continue to do my best'.

3. Find humor in everything

The best medicine for a dark mood or a brain full of worrisome thoughts is to smile or laugh. Give yourself permission to laugh at something today and every day - even if it's yourself. Have you done something that seemed silly or not so smart lately? Laugh at it. Did you and your coworkers have an argument? Smile

about it because smiling about it is much easier than obsessing about it. Once you smile, it will send a signal to your brain that it's not very bothersome, which will send happy chemicals through your body leaving you feeling more positive in future similar situations.

4. Be around positive or like-minded people

It's hard to change your unhealthy negative mindset when you surround yourself with people that feel and think the same way. Even though you may feel close to these people, remind yourself that you are adopting change for the sole reason of overcoming ways of overthinking. In the last chapter of this book, we will define what toxic people are and how to escape them. In the meantime, surround yourself with people that give good advice and who have your best interests at heart.

5. Practice positive self-talk

This includes positive affirmations to tell yourself every day and creating mantras that will help you get through a negative thought-spiral. A good idea is to create your own flash cards, then whenever you need them, pull them out and read them. Some examples are *I am grateful for all of my experiences; I have happy people in my life, and they deserve me at my best; I deserve greatness because I believe in myself; one step forward is all it takes to overcome this struggle*. Think about things you are grateful for, say encouraging things to yourself that you would usually

say to someone else, and remember to remind yourself that you are everything you need in this world because you are worth it.

When you think about positivity, think about the most positive person in your life, or the one person you look up to the most, and try to implement ways of their thinking into your own life. Become experienced and curious about creating the most positive things and developing them into your life. Your life is what you make of it, so if you don't like it, be okay to change it. With change comes experience and that's always a positive thing.

How to Implement Structure into Your Life

Is your life all over the place? Do you feel as though you never have any spare time on your hands to do anything? Do you feel so stressed out that even when you do try to relax, it never works? Do your ruminating thoughts keep you up at night about all of the many things you have to do tomorrow and the next day and the next? Welcome to an unstructured and unbalanced habit that you created. Structure and balance help you get things done and feel as though you do have time on your hands. When you have structure in your life, you have a plan and a daily routine that you follow leading up to your main goals and life aspirations. Structure is the one thing keeping your head on straight and your life on track.

Lack of structure can leave someone feeling as though we have tasks that are never-ending, and relationships that seem to be falling apart because we are always saying yes, then never following through. People are so spontaneous - which is a great thing - but not so great when you have too many things to do. A plan can get someone on track, and a daily schedule can help you when the days are long and tiring. So, get out your planner and start planning a more structured routine to create some balance in your life. Here are a few steps to get you started.

1. Create theme days or theme weeks

This is a step for you if you have a ton of different things to do. It's a process where you group similar tasks together and focus on completing them. For example, if Mondays is your busiest day of the week, then you will want to have a lighter load of things to do on this day. Use Tuesday to catch up on the things you missed Monday and use Wednesday as a steady flow day - whichever works best for you.

2. Plan the week coming on a Sunday, or the day right before your work week starts

When you plan your week before it starts, you will have a better vision and idea on what you can get done and when. This day is when you would put important meetings in your calendar, schedule in friend time, downtime, and family time. Use a planner to estimate your days by the hour and make notes of what you cannot estimate right now to reassess later in the week. This will keep you organized and refreshed before a hectic week starts.

3. Every night plan tomorrow

Once you have your week down pat, you can then focus on the shorter goals or tasks like what are you going to do from this time to this time tomorrow. The reason it's beneficial to do this every night is because throughout the day, we might have not been able to get everything done, and so we would then have to schedule it in for the next day. When you do make a

schedule like this, it's best to stick to it because when you get behind is when life becomes stressful, so try not to take on too much and always make sure you have time for yourself to recuperate. After all, you can't get anything done if your mind is packed or jumbled up.

4. Create a morning and night routine

If your life is too crazy to stick to the same thing every day, or if you are the type of person that likes spontaneity, then a set schedule may not work for you. In this case, start small. Figure out what you want to do in the morning or night, and then figure the rest out as you go. For example, if you want to start jogging make it a morning routine before breakfast or at night before your shower. If you want more downtime in the mornings, schedule in a little meditation before work. Here is an example morning routine:

- a. Wake up, have orange juice (or coffee, whatever you like)
- b. Take a morning stroll
- c. Come home, shower
- d. Get dressed
- e. Read the paper or watch the news
- f. Start your work day

Make your night time routine relaxing and your morning routine energizing. The rest of the day is up to you on what you decide to do. The point is that if your life doesn't hold structure, you need to fit it in somewhere for your mind to be able to relax.

5. Take care of yourself

This is a given, but you must remember in your

schedule to eat healthy, get enough exercise, have some downtime, and create social events to get enough interpersonal communication in your day. If you don't have enough time in one day to get this done, dedicate one day to doing it. If you struggle with doing stuff for yourself, just think about what your favorite thing to do is, or what you have always wanted to do or try. Once you know that, pencil it in your schedule.

Creating structure takes dedication, motivation, decision-making, and finally sticking to it. Sticking to your structured life makes room for healthy attitudes and positive lifestyles because you have created balance and control. Making time for yourself also helps you continue through those days that seem stressful because all work and no play is no fun.

Say Goodbye to Old Habits

People always talk about changing their life for the better, but never end up doing it because they don't know how. Making change means changing your old habits to ones that you will be happy doing. If you are unhappy doing something, then your old habits will take control and new habits will stay just an idea. As it takes two months or more to create habits, your new routine and structured lifestyle has to be something you enjoy doing or it will never stick.

When it comes to breaking habits, there are some steps you must take in order to start new habits. These steps are provided for you below:

1. Define your triggers

Every habit has a trigger. For example, if you are a smoker, you may have a smoke after every meal, when you drink, or when you are with other people. So you must replace these triggers with new ones, the

underlying need of a smoker could be that they need something to do with your hands. Since you cannot stop eating, replace having a smoke with chewing gum, or take up knitting, or writing. Every habit has five triggers and you must define these triggers to completely rid yourself of this habit. These cues or triggers include:

- a. Location
- b. Time
- c. Emotional states (stress, bad moods)
- d. Other people (influences)
- e. An immediate reaction following the habit.

Once you learn what triggers your habit, you can start taking small steps toward solving it.

2. One step at a time

Creating new habits take time and patience in order to kick it for good. Be patient with yourself and start small. Break up your habit in steps. For example, if you automatically leave your plate on your living room table when you are finished eating, and then forget about it, practice bringing your plate to the kitchen. Eventually you will learn to rinse your plate, then to wash it, then to rinse wash, dry, and put away. When you do that every time you eat, it will become a habit.

3. Mark your projected change on a calendar

More often than not we tend to fall back into our old habits. Sometimes it's because we forget, other times it's because we don't have the willpower to continue. Look at your calendar and make a note of your habit

you are trying to change. Write down why you want to change it, then the benefits you will obtain from doing it. This should move you forward and keep you on track.

4. Create an 'if, then' action plan

Habits, like routines, are 'loops' that we repeat systematically without realizing it. If you want change (as said previously), then you must do something different, otherwise all you can expect are the same results. Create an 'if, then' to disrupt the pattern and consciously do something different. For example, **if** I go for a jog at (certain time), **then** I will feel better about myself. Or **if** I don't meditate now, **then** I won't be making much change. After that, put a positive spin on it, 'I want to make a change because I want a better situation for myself and stop these obsessive thoughts.'

In any situation, breaking a habit means that you need to be conscious of it and then make the necessary changes to stay away from it. Next time you do something that you want to change, pause, think about it, do something different than you are used to, and think about what can benefit you from doing this new thing. Then repeat the steps every single time. Not only will you be practicing self-awareness, but you will also be making healthier choices, and practicing making wiser decisions, which will make you feel better.

Chapter Summary

Breaking habits and developing new ones can only be your decision to make. No one can force you out of a decision, but much of your overthinking is caused by having this negative habit implemented into your daily life. In order to break this from your life and free your mind, you must follow the steps in this chapter to rid yourself of this unhealthy habit. As habits are mostly taught, you can learn how to teach yourself out of these habits. Think back to when you were young and didn't stress about half of the things you stress about now. Yes, you may have been young and naive, but sometimes being young and naive is beneficial for the sole fact that you were innocent once and didn't care what the world throws at you. That was when your mind was free, and to overcome this state of mind that you are in now, you just have to create a habit around positive thinking and getting out of your own head.

In this chapter, you learned

- How to turn positive thinking into a habit.
- The importance of positive thinking.
- How to create a routine based around structure.
- How to live a balanced life through a structured routine.
- How to break a habit.
- How to replace a habit with a habit you want.
- The benefits of change.

In the next chapter, you will learn about toxic people and how to spot a negative or dark personality that will only drag you down. This last chapter is perhaps the most important chapter to take notes from considering most of our experiences involve other people and who we choose to hang around with. You will learn about abusive relationships and figure out how to surround yourself with the right people. Learn how to create boundaries, and develop confidence in your decisions and in your life with the company you choose to keep in Chapter Nine.

Chapter Nine: Break the Fifth Chain - Toxic People

Ever hear the phrase ‘you are who you hang out with?’ or ‘dogs who lay together share the same fleas?’ Metaphorically speaking, this means that people who hang with a certain crowd becomes the product of who their influences are. That is why jocks hang with other jocks in school, coworkers that share the same interests get along best, and siblings get along when they are older. Now, imagine which people you hang out with and don’t label them, but try to define one as toxic or healthy. Are all your relationships healthy? Or, is there one friend, family member, or even coworker in your life dragging you down? Do you end up leaving your conversations fulfilled or out of sorts? You can usually tell from your group of relationships which friends are there for you and which are not.

Aside from the normal ‘bad’ friend who gives you bad advice, or the interpersonal relationships that leave you curious about their intentions, there are dark personalities out there. These personalities are called the dark triad and consist of narcissists, machiavellianists, and psychopaths. These people are the ones you should be the most concerned about. I would like to touch on them first, in order to understand the difference between a toxic person and a dangerous person.

The Dark Triad

The dark triad refers to three distinct personality types that are each defined as having a disorder within their respective personalities. This means that the dark triad of personality types do not know that they have a disorder and so trying to change them might be just a waste of time. Here are the three examples.

- **Narcissism** - A narcissist is selfish, boastful, egotistical, lacks empathy and is extremely hypersensitive to criticism. They

don't think that they can do anything wrong and are master manipulators. They don't feel the way we do in the sense that when they do something wrong, if they feel guilty they don't show it, but rather point blame onto you instead. They can make you feel crazy and actually have you spiral out of control.

● **Machiavellianism** - Machiavellianists are master manipulators who specialize in destroying your world as a way to build themselves up. They are only interested in themselves and don't feel guilt or shame. Their morals are 'offset', and they lack emotional connection and empathy. These dark personalities feed on the misfortunes of others to get ahead.

● **Psychopathy** - Psychopaths are usually raised or taught to be a certain way. Their upbringing may not have been the most pleasant and so they have learned that all humans are against them. These types of people also have no empathy and usually show no remorse for their wrong doings. They are antisocial and manipulative to get what they want while they set up ways to be happy stemming from someone else's misery. These are the types of people that are most likely criminals and have no guilt in their pleasure of ruining someone's life.

In all aspects, these human beings are different but very similar in the way they act. Here are some tell-tale signs you may be dealing with one of the three dark triads:

1. They don't listen to you

They hear what you're saying, may show some sort of interest, but never actually follow through with what they say they will do. They are great charmers and will draw you in just by telling you what you want to hear. If they have a chance to become close to you, they will

exploit your weaknesses and make you believe what they want you to believe. A dark triad personality type will dismiss your feelings, ignore your requests, minimize your goals, and take credit for what you have accomplished.

2. They are selfish

They are very selfish people. When they see something they want, they go after it no matter the consequences. A narcissist may feel guilt but lack empathy, whereas a psychopath will do things on purpose without hiding their intentions and feeling no guilt in the process. They can behave from one extreme to the next to get what they want and need. These people are so self-centered that it may feel as though they are hogging the air in every conversation making every interaction feel as though their story is more important than yours.

3. They feel victimized

Whenever you tell them how you feel, they become sensitive and feel victimized. Problems never get solved and you may feel as though you are in an endless battle with them. When you try to explain your reasoning, they have a hard time looking at it as a positive thing and think that you are just projecting your own emotions onto them. With this, they will point blame on you and never take responsibility for their own actions making you feel as though you are crazy.

4. Nothing is their fault

If they are mad, it's your fault. If they fail at something it's someone else's fault. If they are upset by an action they caused, it ends in them gaslighting you.

Gaslighting means that whatever they did it was because you made them do it. They act one way and say the opposite and never hold true to their promises. Everything upsetting that has ever happened to you is never their fault.

Living with or associating with a dark triad member can leave you fighting for the mental strength to go about your daily tasks. You may feel tied down and helpless to help others. If you feel isolated and have little to no friends, and your family members have backed away from you, it may be because of the company you keep. The dark triad personalities will convince you that all you need is them, and it can be hard to gain the respect of others back when you get rid of them. Coming back from a dark triad relationship can take a huge amount of work and may leave you impaired or vulnerable to falling into another trap. If these signs sound familiar to you, it's time to leave right now.

How to Spot a Toxic Person

Now that we have learned what the dark triad is, we can move on to what a lesser version of these types are. A toxic person does not necessarily fall under the characteristics of the dark triad. However, a toxic person is still damaging to your mental and emotional health and sometimes physical health. Most of the time they are master manipulators and are very likable at first. Here are some definite signs of a toxic person:

1. They gossip or talk about other people

Most of the time someone who talks badly about someone else, or takes credit for someone else's work, will do the same to you. They do this because they are

jealous or envious of others and like to make themselves look good. However, do not mistake them as someone who is favoring you as their best friend to tell secrets to. This is one of the first signs that they are toxic beings.

2. They always find something to complain about

It is normal to vent, as everyone does. But there is a difference between venting about a bad day, or having a problem that they are seeking advice about, and someone who always complains about their life. People who complain all the time may show signs of negativity which can influence how you feel about your own life and thoughts. You may find yourself stuck trying to solve all their problems that you forget about yourself.

3. They like to brag

Everyone likes to talk about their accomplishments and tell stories about how they got to be successful or how they got to where they are in their life. On the other hand, a toxic person will likely go on and on about their successes and minimize or compete with your accomplishments. These people are toxic and will likely steal your spotlight the first chance they get.

4. You feel as though you need to defend your actions

Have you ever been in a conversation where you are having to explain to someone why you made the choices you did? Or, maybe for no reason at all, you want to impress them but feel as though you can't?

This is when the toxic person has trapped you into believing that to be their friend you must act as they expect in order to be worthy of their 'friendship'.

Falling into this trap will get you nowhere and have you always trying to explain yourself. You are already an overthinker, this type of person does not need you using the little mental energy you have to impress them.

5. They don't make you feel important

If you have a problem, and try to address them, your concerns may not be as important to them as you would like. Or, if you have great news that you are excited to share with them, then they give you the exact opposite response you were looking for, it may leave you confused. If you have ever left a conversation expecting one result and getting the opposite, this person does not support you and will continue to make you question yourself. This can greatly impact how much worrying you do to show that you are a genuine person.

These are just a few signs of what it's like being involved with a toxic person. If you ever come out questioning your morals or beliefs, it's time to think of minimizing your interactions. What you should be feeling after a conversation is enlightened and supported. You should feel just as empowered as you try to make your friend or loved one feel. If you have ever felt that someone is your friend because you are giving them a benefit then this is a clear sign that they are toxic. What I mean by this is, you should never have to question the intent of your true friends. Friends and good influences stick around because they genuinely care, not because they want to use you or every time they come around it's because they need something or it's convenient for

them. You need to find people that want to make the time to schedule you into their day and make you feel important.

How to Escape a Toxic Relationship (Friend, Workmate, and Partner)

In any type of relationship, if the above signs sound familiar you must take action to decrease your interaction or rid them from your life completely. In order to escape overthinking, you need to surround yourself with positive people and influences as a means to change.

At the beginning of this chapter you read the phrase *dogs who sleep together share the same fleas*. Well, this saying is only true if you let it become true. It is up to you to define the toxicity in your life and do something about it. These next steps are steps to take about how to remove a toxic person from your life.

1. Demonstrate and uphold boundaries

Toxic people cannot be changed. It's how they are and so the faster you can accept this the better off you will be. Once you have a clear recognition of who they are, change for them will only happen if they make the effort to do so and are aware of what they are doing. You cannot do this for them. All you can do is set clear boundaries and stick to them. To do this, you need to take a long hard look at your values and see what is negotiable and what is not. If you really want to develop a strong positive attitude, then being around negative people should not be tolerated. If you find that the person is being negative or acting in an unkind way, simply say 'I am trying to change for the better. If you would like to work on your attitude then I will support you, but for now I am going to walk away

because I will not be involved with this conversation if this is going to continue.’ This shows that you will not tolerate nonsense, but you still respect them. Thus, you are not attempting to change them, but, rather, controlling your own beliefs and setting clear boundaries.

2. Don’t allow yourself to be sucked into their drama

When a friend is having a crisis, it is only normal to come to their beck and call. But, have you ever come to a friend’s side and then found out it was just pointless drama that you are now involved in? Have you regretted coming in the first place because it had nothing to do with you, and now you are stressed about it? This is called being sucked back in. Learn to recognize when someone really needs help, or when they have created their own drama that should have nothing to do with you, and kindly say no. Saying no might be hard at first, but let them know you are there for them when they are done dealing with what they need to deal with. You are a shoulder to cry on, not a superhero to fix their problems.

3. Own your weaknesses and be okay with who you are

Toxic people will find your mistakes, exploit your weaknesses, and remind you of your regrets. When you own your flaws and are okay with who you are through your experiences, you take away the power of

them being able to get to you. Believe that you are a good person that is not perfect. Understand that your regrets have shaped you into who you are now.

Recognize that if any person is going to throw these misfortunes against you, that they are not here to help you but to use you and bring you down.

4. Recognize projection

If someone in your life hurts you purposely, they aren't actually seeing that what they are doing is hurting you. Grab a hold of your emotions, and don't take things personally when around a toxic person.

Projection is when someone points out your flaws and mistakes because they see it in themselves. They have not accepted who they are so they bully or knock you down in the belief that they are better than you. Toxic people do this on purpose and by accident. Simply state that what they are doing is hurting you and let them know that if they continue, you will not tolerate it and will have to leave. If they lash out and say that you are being unsupportive, don't take it to heart, just recreate those solid boundaries and walk away.

5. Choose healthy relationships

Removing toxic people from your life may be extremely difficult, but by doing so will leave you with room to make new friends. Friends that will support you and grow with you. Healthy relationships are those that listen to you, hear your problems, create solutions and try to do better every day. If you leave a conversation

feeling empowered and exhilarated, it means that you have just undergone a positive and healthy relationship.

Part of knowing who you are will make ridding negative people from your life easier. You need to figure out what you can handle and what you can't. If you are seriously trying to do better for yourself, it will become second nature to you to leave toxic people behind. Ask yourself just one question in the midst of all of this - how often do you obsess over if you were good enough or what someone thinks of you? If it's a lot then most of your relationships are unhealthy. The opposite of an overthinker is someone who knows who they have in their lives, never questions their relationships, and feels good about the next day. You need to stop and figure out who in your life you trust most, then surround yourself with more of those types of people.

Chapter Summary

Whether you are surrounded by the dark triad, or a toxic friendship, or a family member that you cannot just drop contact with, the point of this chapter was not to rid yourself of negative influences but to adopt a positive mindset, and become assertive in your quest to be influenced by true friends and relationships. Own your mistakes, and never let someone have the power over you that they don't deserve. Become familiar with yourself so that you can spot a toxic person before you get too close. The closer your relationships the harder it will be to minimize your contact with them later.

In this chapter, you learned:

- How to spot a toxic person.
- What the dark triad is.
- Why negative people are not beneficial to you.
- The signs of and traits of a dark person.
- How to say no by setting boundaries.
- Why owning who you are is important.
- How to escape a toxic relationship.
- Why it is crucial to surround yourself with positive influences.

This was the last chain you need to break in order to be truly free from overthinking. As you probably figured out by now, it's a complex web of obstacles which cannot be solved overnight. Still, the fact that you chose to take action means you are on the right path. Don't give up and take each chain one by one until you become truly free.

A New Dawn

A new dawn suggests a new change, a brighter future, and the flip side to something you have wanted to do for a while. In this book, “Breaking Overthinking” you have learned every chain in the mind of an overthinker. We have addressed every single chain in multiple ways and now you can break them once and for all. Whether you have already started to practice some of the strategies mentioned, or you are just getting started, one thing is for sure: once you take the first step, you will never look back.

By now you should be looking at an overthinker as someone you used to be, not as someone you are. You should be comfortable with what needs to be done, and understand why you have developed the mind of an overthinker. There are a lot of chains you need to break; however, this shouldn't discourage you. Take it one step at a time. Maybe being mindful and practicing meditation is where you will start. Perhaps decluttering your home is the first thing you will do. Possibly working on your habits is what you feel you need to do. Or, let's suppose defining your relationships should be the first chain to break. You can start wherever you feel most comfortable. Working from the last chain up to the first, or even starting from the middle. Whatever you do, as long as you choose to be mindful, aware, structured, active, and strive to be positive every day, you won't have any problems.

When you started this book, I promised you that as long as you tried your hardest to practice the strategies presented here you would become who you have always wanted to be. That could be the confident business person you dreamed of being. Or, it could be that reliable friend you have previously failed to be because of your worries. It could be the loving spouse your significant other has missed so much. Whatever your goal was before you started this book, my promise was that you would learn strategies to get out of your head and get what you wished for. So, the one thing to look forward to from this point on is to practice being that person by letting go of your worries and tackling the

many challenges you will face by overcoming every chain presented to you in this book.

If there are two things you must remember constantly is that life is too short to be negative and worrying about things of no importance to you will only bring you misery. Life will always be more fulfilling as long as you stay positive and be mindful of all that you are grateful for. There was a reason you bought this book, so make that reason your reality.

Cheers!

Master Your Emotions

**Develop Emotional Intelligence and
Discover the Essential Rules of When
and How to Control Your Feelings**

Eric Robertson

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Introduction

Emotions are what make up a person and define their behaviors - at least that's what the psychologists say. But is this entirely true? My theory on emotions is that they don't have to control our lives. We need to be able to understand them before we can control or even cope with them. When our emotions get the best of us, then we may act on our impulsive urges which results in irrational and illogical behavior. Some of the emotions we can experience are sadness, anger, happiness, and fear.

You will learn that all emotions stem from two main emotions which get broken up into four sub-emotions. The two main emotions that our other emotions revolve around are **love** and **fear**. When these two emotions are thrown off balance or when you find it difficult to control one of them, everything can be thrown out of proportion. Before you can get back on track it is best to try to understand each individual emotion and to be more aware of what's happening inside your mind (thoughts) and in your body (physical symptoms).

The ability to control and understand your emotions is to have a high EQ level. EQ is known as **Emotional Intelligence** and with high levels of EQ, you are less likely to act on your impulses and be irritable with yourself or others. Emotional intelligence is the ability to be aware of your own emotions and control them while also being willing to understand the emotions of others around you.

This book will help you develop your EQ. It is outlined in an easy to read format so that you can look at an emotion, define it, figure out why it's necessary, why it's hard to control and even when to just sit with an emotion. The ability to control and cope with your emotions is a powerful skill to achieve and actually promotes success and happiness.

Emotional intelligence has changed many lives for the better because it allows you to develop five key skills needed to be aware of yourself and others. These characteristics are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The characteristics of emotional intelligence will be defined and explained in much more

detail in the first chapter. It's hard to understand and learn about our emotions when we don't understand emotional intelligence. As you read through this book make sure to keep in mind that every emotion and every skill you want to work on takes practice and patience to overcome or sit with. Without emotional intelligence, we wouldn't be able to cope with or even understand our emotions. These emotions could spiral out of control and just take over - that's a world in which we would all be a bunch of rageaholics or depressed zombies.

Think of a time when you became **surprised** by something which then made you really **happy** or extremely **sad**. The emotions that you experienced may have made you annoy others or do things that you **regret**. With that regret, you could have spiraled to make more poor decisions which may have then made you **angry**. Then you took that anger, tried to control it but because your EQ is unbalanced you entered a situation where you felt you had to defend yourself, then your **fear** took over. You broke down into a panic attack which then leads to **trust** issues due to the blame on others based on the original surprising experience.

If this sounds even remotely similar to any type of circumstance or scenario you went through, then this book is definitely for you. The information included has been thoroughly researched and makes for an easy-to-read experience. This book was designed to be read with patience and returned to as needed so you can go over the emotions you struggle with the most, learn, and crawl out of these disastrous situations. Each chapter is laid out for an individual emotion. This is because when you are experiencing an uncontrollable emotion, you can flip to the chapter, read your favorite part and remind yourself to move forward.

My promise to you is that by the time you are done reading this book you will have enough knowledge to truly understand each emotion better and how to control your emotions when they try to take over. You will never experience an out of control emotional experience again - or almost never - after reading and taking to heart the information in this book. Being confused is no fun so learn a little, live a little, and become who you want by learning about your emotions rather than allowing them to control you.

Chapter One: Emotional Map

We experience emotions every single day of our lives. When someone shows us the unexpected, we become shocked or surprised. If something great happens or someone tells us a funny joke, we laugh and are happy. If we go through a breakup or a divorce we become sad. If someone or something frightens us we become scared and untrusting. Some emotions are overwhelming and hard to control, whereas other emotions are easier to manage. For example, if you are happy, the only way this emotion can spiral out of control is if you laugh too much and are just on an emotional high, full of positive feelings to the extent that you cannot control your excitement. However, some emotions can be more difficult to deal with, such as sadness, which can turn into depression (if not managed), and anger, which can turn into rage issues (again, if not managed).

So, what are emotions you ask? Emotions are feelings we experience based on the situations we are in or the outcomes we experience. Happiness is the feeling we get when we have experienced a satisfying outcome, whereas sadness is the feeling we get when we don't get what we expected. Another definition of emotions according to William James is, you feel what you feel based on the physical happenings in your body such as heart rate, breathing rate, sweating, and hormone levels. In this point of view or opinion, happiness, sadness, anger, regret, etc. are not judgments based on your situation but about how you react to (or feel about) your bodily sensations.

Of course, these are just theories based around emotions but who says that emotions cannot involve both? You can be upset or happy about a situation or outcome based on what you expected or judged would happen - and you can feel upset or happy about the physiological changes that happen in your body. What if your body changes its heart rate because you are undergoing some unexpected situation? What if the situations you are experiencing are causing bodily changes thus impacting your mood? So, how do you control them? How do we know which emotion is which, since so many can be defined or wrapped up

into one big emotion such as happiness or anger, love or fear? People with high emotional intelligence skills are people who can control their emotions and are able to define exactly which emotion they are experiencing. However, emotional intelligence is not the only way to control and define emotions.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is also known as the 'Emotional Quotient' and is the ability to control and supervise your own emotions along with being able to monitor other peoples' emotions. EQ is also the ability to differentiate between - and label the different emotions - in a deeper sense. For example, someone with high EQ may be able to interpret feeling angry as actually feeling disappointed. In another sense, emotional intelligence is the ability to maneuver your thinking patterns and behavior or actions accordingly to influence others. We use emotional intelligence to connect with coworkers, have deep and trustworthy relationships, and make our best effort to discipline our children. Emotional intelligence comes in handy when we strive to create boundaries with the people we are unsure about and empathize with the people we care about.

Emotional intelligence comes with five different components:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social Skills

To be **self-aware** means that you can recognize and understand your own emotions with a large 'emotional vocabulary.' Essentially, it is the foundation of what emotional intelligence is and what it represents. Regulating our emotions, motivating ourselves, empathizing with others, and socializing appropriately all revolves around being more self-aware, which is why it is the crucial element of emotional intelligence.

The ability to **self-regulate** is the next step in learning how to be emotionally intelligent or to have a high 'EQ.' It defines you as having the ability to manage or act accordingly to your emotions and that of others, not just defining or being aware of them. People who are unable to self-regulate their emotions are people who let their emotions get the best of them. Further, such people may experience such high levels of emotion that they act impulsively on them and make challenging situations even worse.

Motivation is the level of emotional intelligence that someone can easily be encouraged by their own selves to move closer to their goals. They don't let their emotions take control of them if those emotions are going to stand in the way of their future accomplishments. People who develop or improve self-motivation skills gain motivation internally rather than externally. What this means is that if you possess high emotional intelligence in terms of motivation, you are more likely to feel inspired by doing what you love and overcoming your fears if they stand in the way of your aspirations and beliefs. External motivation means that people are only driven if they are doing something for wealth, respect, or fame - i.e. external reasons - rather than personal growth or achievement.

Empathy is the ability to understand how someone else is feeling aside from your own beliefs. It's when you can encourage someone based on being able to put yourself in their shoes and letting go of your personal judgments. Empathy doesn't mean that you can relate, but rather you are able to see someone's side through their eyes - seeing as they do. Having the self-regulation and self-awareness skills added to being empathetic means that you can be aware of your own emotions and understand and recognize someone else's feelings. Since you are able to manage and deal with your emotions (or situations) and theirs, you are in a position to help others and support them with problem-solving.

As for having **social skills**, this is the last piece of the puzzle of emotional intelligence, simply because you need to implement and develop every other element to behave effectively in a social setting or environment. Having social skills along with emotional intelligence means that you can successfully carry on a deep relationship or

otherwise respectful one with people around you. People that have developed high EQ's have been able to master talking to large groups of people in such a way that those people can relate to or be easily influenced by the person talking to them. People with high social intelligence find themselves able to pursue their goals and come out with what they expected would happen thus leaving them happier and more fulfilled by interacting with others.

So, how do you develop these emotional intelligence skills? In each skill, there are other sub-skills needed to learn, develop, and master before someone can say they have a high EQ. However, having a high EQ doesn't mean that you are able to fully understand and control your emotions either, as we are all only human and no one is perfect. It is okay to completely lose control, and it is also okay to be in complete control. The sub-skills needed to learn for each element in emotional intelligence are as follows:

● **Self-Awareness**

- Emotional awareness - Understanding your own emotions and the effect they have on you.
- Self-assessment - Knowing your strengths and weaknesses, when to push yourself, and when not to.
- Self-confidence - Appreciation of oneself and self-worth.

● **Self-Regulation**

- Self-control - The ability to control your own emotions and fight against impulses and urges.
- Trustworthiness - Ensuring that honesty and being genuine are being exhibited.
- Conscientiousness - Taking responsibility for your own actions without placing blame on anyone else.
- Flexibility - Being able to manage and understand change.
- Innovativeness - Being comfortable and open to hearing or undergoing new and refreshing ideas.

●Self-Motivation

- Aspirational or driven - Continuing to attempt to pursue excellence in meeting your personal standards.
- Commitment - Being able to commit and complete little goals that leave you feeling empowered.
- Initiative - The ability to act on opportunities without guidance.
- Optimism - Becoming resilient through negative experiences and setbacks.

●Empathy

- Empathetic - The ability to sense how others are feeling and see from their perspective.
- Service orientation - Understanding and recognizing someone's needs.
- Political awareness - Being able to read a group's emotional states and figuring out 'power' relationships.
- Developing others - Being able to help others through knowing what their specific needs and skills are.

●Social Skills:

- Communication - Sending clear messages while being able to interpret information effectively.
- Leadership - The ability to influence others and guide people.
- Conflict management - The ability to solve a problem in an appropriate manner with different audiences.
- Team skills - The ability and effectiveness to be progressive in a group setting.

As you can see, there are many aspects and sub-skills needed to develop a high emotional intelligence level. Emotional intelligence is

about being able to understand and label your own emotions and being able to help others by understanding what their emotions are.

Mastering your emotions is not just about understanding what every feeling means but also about how to handle them. It's about understanding when to control them and when you shouldn't. How do you learn to act or react when you are experiencing negative emotions? What to do when you experience positive emotions? These situations are when someone with a high emotional intelligence level knows what to do and how to act.

Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence

Now that we have the facts about what emotional intelligence is, we can sit down and figure out what an emotionally intelligent person looks like. With the skills applied and the knowledge in hand, we can now define simple characteristics that show what a person does to master their own emotions.

1. Feelings are well thought about

People that have high emotional intelligence skills will reflect on their choices and decisions. They will ask themselves things like:

- a. What emotions are difficult for me?
- b. Which emotions are easy to control?
- c. What is my current mood making me feel like I need to do or say right now?

2. Pausing before acting or reacting

When people act or speak impulsively, they usually end up regretting it later or become overwhelmed by the many tasks they took on. Have you ever said something to someone, then thought about it later and wished you could take it back? Or, maybe you have done something out of spite or anger (acting on impulse) then thought about it later and felt ashamed or guilty. Emotionally intelligent people learn to pause, think about something, then act.

3. Controlling negative thoughts is very important

Many people think that their emotions control the way they think

and act, however, this is not true at all. It is possible to be angry without acting out in an angry manner. You do this by focusing on your current mood, watching the thoughts associated with it, and then making a wise or healthy decision based on the circumstances you are in. For example, an emotionally intelligent person will know that just because they are sad, they don't need to act on the sadness that they feel. If they cannot control their sadness, they may reach out to someone for help or write it out in their journal. They will not make someone else sad or go out of their way to be destructive because their mood is negative.

4. Criticism is taken lightly

An emotionally intelligent person will take the feedback of others and look at it as advice (rather than criticism) and think about the intent behind the opposing party's words. They find criticism as an opportunity for growth and realize that it gives them a window into what another person is feeling and thinking. Instead of reacting or becoming defensive with criticism, pause and ask yourself how you can make this better.

5. They are authentic

Authenticity is about saying what you mean then following through with appropriate actions in accordance with what you said. So if you said 'I will mow the lawn today,' and follow through with what you said you were going to do, this is authenticity. Emotionally intelligent people show high levels of authenticity. They say what they mean, are completely honest, and do what they say they are going to do.

6. Being empathetic

Emotionally intelligent people will show empathy and compassion towards someone, even if they are strangers or acquaintances. Empathy is not about agreeing with someone, but skill in seeing from their perspective. Then drawing from that information and helping the person get through whatever they are going through based on your own knowledge.

7. Praise comes naturally

Emotionally intelligent people believe more in the praise of others than on the criticism or discipline of others. Positive

reinforcement is how people with high EQ's like to build trust in relationships. This happens when you learn how to focus on the good in others and appreciate people's efforts rather than judging them by their past statements and actions. By inspiring someone to be their best selves through praise and positive reinforcement, you are demonstrating high emotional intelligence.

8. Apologies are effective

Sometimes people apologize because they feel obligated to say 'sorry'. When someone who understands how to control their own emotions - as well as recognizes someone else's feelings - apologies are not just said out of obligation. When apologies are said, they are said with much thought and with the utmost genuine feeling. Apologizing doesn't mean you are wrong, however, it does mean that the relationship in front of you means more to you personally than your own ego or pride.

9. It's easy to forgive and forget

Most of the time people will hold grudges for their own selfish reasons which can break a bond and relationship. Forgiving and forgetting is not about being able to forgive the other person but being able to let go of the negative energy you hold. Hanging on to resentment can stop your personal growth from happening and may actually diminish strong bonds in the future. While the opposing party is off living their life, you are stuck worrying and obsessing about how they have done you wrong. Emotionally intelligent people do not do this. Instead, they understand that by holding onto resentment it prevents them from moving forward.

10. They protect themselves from emotional damage

Not everyone is a 'good' person and so if you work on your emotional intelligence skills, you will learn to see the signs of an emotionally destructive person. These types of people like to manipulate and gain control of others out of their own personal selfishness. An emotionally intelligent person will understand what these people look and act like and create boundaries and make wise decisions about such relationships.

Understanding what an emotionally intelligent person looks and acts like can help you gain a better idea or perspective on how to control and

balance your own emotions. If you know anyone who possesses these traits, make friends with them and have them be your guide and inspiration on how you can better manage your own emotions. If you already hold some of these traits (if not all of them) then good job. Being emotionally intelligent means that you can successfully build lasting relationships, implement security in your personal life, and find acceptance with the things that you cannot control.

Parts of the Brain that are Responsible for Controlling Emotions

Alongside what emotions are and how to portray them in a positive and balanced way, we also need to understand where they come from and how they form. Emotions stem from our brain - like everything else. Our brains are complex in controlling many things that happen in our bodies from heart rate to how and when we move our toes. Our brains are responsible for all the thoughts and information we perceive and interpret; it stores memories so we can learn from our experiences and how we understand situations. The brain has many organs inside that control every aspect of how we move, how we think, and how we feel.

The limbic system is the part of the brain that is responsible for controlling our thoughts and emotions. The limbic system has four regions that comprise it. These four regions are:

- **Hypothalamus** - Controls and regulates emotions as well as our sexual responses, hormone releases, and body temperatures.
- **Hippocampus** - Mainly known for storing short-term memories which means that whatever we experience (see, hear, feel, etc...) gets stored first in the hippocampus. Later, these short term memories are moved to the amygdala for longer-term processing. The hippocampus activates our feelings involved with given scenarios and situations. These emotions then become linked to our experiences and these travel to the amygdala for deeper filing.

● **Amygdala** - This part of the limbic system is responsible for deep filing such as memories that stick, triggers, childhood experiences, etc. It works with the hippocampus to trigger feelings resulting from our emotional responses. For example, the hippocampus will store when you first meet someone and what their names are and how we feel about them (first impressions). The amygdala then activates and stores the initial memory into more long term memories helping you to remember their name in the long run. If there was a bad first impression, the amygdala stores the negative emotions associated with this person (hence triggers). The amygdala also plays an important role in fear and anger.

● **Limbic Cortex** - Both the cingulate gyrus and the parahippocampal gyrus work together to impact mood, motivation or inspiration, and judgment and perception. The two structures are what exist inside the limbic cortex.

Without the limbic system or if the limbic system becomes damaged, it would be much more difficult for someone to experience or control their emotions.

There are four main feelings the limbic system helps us make sense of - anger, fear, love, and happiness. Each emotion stems from certain parts of the brain.

Fear is an important emotion because it helps someone make decisions based on their situation. Fear should only happen when you are in danger; however, based on studies of anxiety and depression, feeling fearful can happen when we have an imbalanced chemical flow or a damaged amygdala or hypothalamus. When these regions are damaged or abused, feelings of fear will take over causing the amygdala to send signals to the limbic system. When the amygdala provokes the hypothalamus, it activates a fight or flight response which sends rocketing levels of cortisol and adrenaline throughout the body. These hormones include physical changes such as:

- Faster heart rate
- Irregular breathing
- Low or high blood sugar
- Excessive sweating

These symptoms help a person escape a dangerous situation in which the feeling of fear is needed to fight or flee. The heart rate increases to help a person run faster or fight harder. The irregular breathing can give someone tunnel vision which helps you focus on where it is you need to go. The sweating helps to cool and calm the body. However, when you are not experiencing a serious situation, these symptoms can become exhausting and may make you extremely tired and frightened. In Chapter Five, we will learn more about fear and how you can master it.

Happiness generally implements positive thoughts and feelings and is the emotion where someone feels satisfied and well taken care of. Happiness emotions form in the limbic cortex which mainly focuses on retrieving memories, understanding yourself, and concentration in every situation you involve yourself with. Another part of the brain which is responsible for these aspects is called the precuneus and is located inside the limbic cortex. Studies have proven that people with more gray matter volume found in their precuneus are actually happier and develop more positive emotions in their lives.

Regardless of which main emotion you are feeling, every emotion is linked to a part of the limbic system. Researchers are still trying to decode where emotions come from and why we feel the way we do when we experience them, but the brain is a complicated organ and further research is needed. That said, scientists now know for sure that the limbic system is the main part of the brain that controls basic emotions and the emotions stemming from the four main ones: love, anger, happiness, and fear.

Chapter Summary

Emotions are a big part of our lives - they make us react and act during situations and help us think and behave the way we do. They bring meaning to character and personality. Emotional intelligence is not about how we feel or what emotion we are experiencing at a given time but more about how we respond to our emotions and learning how to control them. Not all emotions need to be controlled but part of learning emotional intelligence is when we can focus on learning the right times and situations to control our emotions.

In this chapter, we learned:

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ●What emotions are | ●What emotional intelligence is | ●What an emotionally intelligent person looks like and how they act | ●The components or elements associated with emotional intelligence | ●Parts of the brain that control and form emotions | ●What the four main emotions are |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

In the next chapter, you will learn what dangers can happen when we cannot control our emotions. Also, we will learn that we don't always have to control our thoughts and feelings but can benefit from learning to be in the moment with them.

Chapter Two: The Dangers of Wild Emotions

Not everyone is born emotionally intelligent because there are skills people have to learn first in order to be able to master emotions. Also, emotional intelligence doesn't mean that you need to have control of your emotions all the time. It simply means that you need to be aware of how you are feeling in the moment and when it comes to talking to someone else, recognizing how they feel in the given situation.

In this chapter, it is good to keep a note of the fact that it is okay to not be in control of your emotions all the time. This chapter simply presents facts about what could happen if you have the inability to control your emotions. As mentioned before, there are two top emotions: love and fear. Emotions which stem from love make up the happiness emotions we feel and the fearful emotions make up the sadness, anger, resentment, guilt, etc. (negative emotions). If we end up suppressing or holding back our feelings we could actually do more damage than good. While you may not necessarily understand how to control your emotions at all times, you will learn through reading this book that sitting with your feelings without judgment is sometimes the best thing you can do.

People who cannot control their emotions usually suppress them or push them aside, hoping that they will go away. However, in doing so, the damage that can be done is actually training your brain that it's okay to push these feelings aside which damages the limbic system. By that I mean the brain will learn that you are okay with pushing your emotions aside, rather than just being with them non-judgmentally. The hippocampus actually shrinks due to the stress it feels from having to deal with your emotions subconsciously. Just because you are not consciously aware of the way you are feeling, does not mean these feelings are not there. Once the hippocampus is damaged, it sends signals to other parts of the brain which are not supposed to receive such signals. This can damage normal emotion functioning which may

make you suffer from a mental or a mood disorder. For example, changing a bad situation into a more positive thinking state may result in damaged emotional health. Such as if you got a bad review from work then tried to think positively about it - 'it's okay, I did fine and will do better for sure next time.' Even though thinking this way is a good thing, the long-term results may not be because you are training your brain to believe that bad experiences are not harmful, this will result in you most likely not learning from your mistakes. Lead researcher, Allison Troy of Franklin and Marshall College says, "Reframing the situation to make it seem less negative may make that person less inclined to attempt to change the situation." This is what I mean by someone changing the way they think about a certain failure or mistake and so they won't learn, as much as they would like to. Instead, they will continue going down the same path and cause emotional damage to themselves, which in turn shapes and changes the limbic regions in your brain.

What this suggests is that we need to make sure that we are aware of our situations and have the correct response or feeling connected to the experience to allow ourselves to learn and grow. If we don't, we will continue doing the same things which could result in putting less effort into the important things that shape our lives, making the situation worse rather than better - even in our best intentions. That is not to say that we cannot be positive in an unfortunate situation because implementing positivity in your life and in your thoughts can be beneficial and create a less stressful environment also.

This may sound confusing as if one minute, it's not a good idea to reframe your mind then in the next minute it's okay. However, when you do reframe the way you think about a stressful experience, the goal is to change the emotional impact it has on you which is called 'cognitive reappraisal.' But it's good to learn and understand when to change your thinking to something positive, and when to sit with it. For example, only when things are out of your control like a family illness or a heartbreaking breakup, is when you should try to 'look on the bright side.' Whereas the things we do have control over like trouble at work or mending a relationship, it's good to be with your feelings because

negative feelings need to be felt and dealt with to grow. When you ignore a bad review at work due to poor performance or other things you can control, you are actually suppressing the negative feelings because you are trying to associate it as bad. We will learn in chapter five how fear can actually be a good thing for success which will explain in more depth why suppressing negative emotions can be harmful.

How Love and Fear are the Foundation of all Emotions

The emotions love and fear are the foundation of all other emotions according to psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. She had made observations over the decades in her work and in the following section of this chapter I will explain why. Her observations suggest that recognizing the difference between the two completely opposite emotions will help you understand how to rule your emotions instead of the other way around.

One of the reasons this theory is true is because, with every positive emotion, you have an opposing emotion. For example, the opposite of happiness is sadness or anger and the opposite of surprised would be shock and so on. When we can define which emotion we feel - love or fear - we can be better equipped to comprehend what we feel and why we are feeling this way. The next step is to manage or learn how to deal with the feeling - either by sitting with a feeling and learning from it or using techniques to rid yourself of it. When we learn how to effectively deal with the emotions that we experience at any moment, we can move past them if it's beneficial to us to do so. Take note of the fact that love and fear can never be felt at the same time. If we find ourselves experiencing a fear-based emotion then dealing with it can suggest that we are trying to feel a more love-based emotion instead. Unless it's involving a situation, we can control like stated previously in this chapter.

The emotions that stem from love are happiness, empathy, certainty, honor, belonging, wonder, and acceptance. Love represents feeling strong affection, passion or affinity.

- **Happiness** - Happiness synonyms are joy, delight, ecstasy, euphoria, bliss, pleasure, etc. You can find happiness by letting go of all your expectations and allow what will happen to happen while being okay with the outcome.
- **Empathy** - As well as a component associated with emotional intelligence, empathy can be defined as compassion, pity, sympathy, kindness, and affection. Empathy is when we see ourselves and our experiences in others so that it is easier to be compassionate of the way someone else feels. This makes it easier to relate and identify with people's situations and experiences.
- **Certainty** - Certainty is manifested from feelings of excitement, confidence, relaxation, self-control, inner courage or even faith. It is the willingness to accept that whatever happens will happen and trusting that whatever the outcome, things will be okay and right in the end.
- **Honor** - Honor is about being trustworthy, dedicated, forgiving, genuine and graceful. This emotion stems from the unity of our beliefs, choices, and behaviors.
- **Belonging** - Belonging comes from when we feel like part of a group or social event without being judged. Belonging represents feelings of support, kinship, helpfulness, connection, reliability, and commitment.
- **Wonder** - Feelings of surprise, amazement, astonishment or curiosity come from our ability to wonder. Wonder also comes from the gratitude that we feel when life presents opportunities to us. It's one of the routes that we feel when we try to make positive decisions or are curious about something.

- **Acceptance** - Acceptance is perhaps the most calming positive emotion that we can feel. It is when we are completely calm and at peace with our decisions or our lives. Acceptance represents feelings of comfort, non-judgment, satisfaction, and cooperation. Essentially it is when you feel completely relaxed and at peace with yourself and your environment.

The emotions that stem from fear are grief, apathy, uncertainty, shame, abandonment, horror, and anger. Fear represents feelings of distaste with the belief that something or someone will hurt us or make us feel pain. The given emotions stemming from fear are the opposite of the feelings which stem from love.

- **Grief** - To feel grief is to feel that things are wrong, unfair, or not as they should be. It's when we have expectations and get disappointed because things didn't turn out the way we planned. We then struggle with accepting the outcome. The synonyms of grief include depression, remorse, guilt, despair, hopelessness, insecurity and doubt.
- **Apathy** - Feelings of apathy include hatred, indifference, disdain, disgust, hostility, resentment, animosity, etc. It is expressed when you feel a lack of empathy or concern for others and yourself. It is when you are disconnected from the world around you.
- **Uncertainty** - Uncertainty is when the unknown is feared, which is actually a problem that most have. It is when we feel as though we do not have control of our future. The feelings stemming from the fear of the unknown are dread, distress, apprehension, uneasiness, stress or even anxiety.
- **Shame** - Shame is when we feel embarrassed, dissatisfied, guilt, jealousy, and humiliation. It is when we feel insecure and

doubtful about the decisions that we have made in our past and fearful of our future actions and present beliefs.

● **Abandonment** - Abandonment is the fear that acceptance will not be granted to us, that we will be judged or ignored. Feelings of abandonment can mean that you feel isolated, lonely, alienated or neglected.

● **Horror** - We feel horror or emotions stemming from horror when we are in deep emotional pain or impending doom. Other emotions that represent horror include, hysteria, shock, panic, helplessness, alarm, disbelief, even terror.

● **Anger** - Anger can result from multiple things, one of which stems from the fear of the unknown, much like uncertainty. Other times we feel angry if we feel as though we don't fit in or if our opinions and what we have to say are dismissed - being judged. Most of the time people get angry because they feel as though they have been wronged, offended or denied. Expressions of anger involve feeling enraged, frustrated, resentful, incompetent, bitter, and aggressive.

These emotions discussed above are based on love or fear and are meant to give you a starting point on determining which emotion you may be feeling. Notice how the above lists have opposing emotions tied together. The reason for this is so that if you feel fear-based emotions such as apathy, you can learn how to turn it into empathy if it's beneficial to do so.

What Causes the Inability to Control Emotions?

Being unable to control one's emotions can be a short-term thing like if in the given moment you get frustrated or angry, then act upon your impulse. Or, it can be a long-term habit which may result in a mood

disorder such as bipolar or borderline personality disorder. Not being able to control your emotions can interfere with your life by making daily tasks seeming more difficult than normal.

Emotional control comes in two aspects, for some, it's habitual to be able to control their emotions, for others it's automatic. Most people that do not have a chronic disorder have an easy time identifying their emotions, why they have them, and what their triggers are against them.

Some symptoms of being unable to control your emotions are as follows:

- Feeling overwhelmed by your emotions - as if they are taking control over you.
- Fearing the expression of your emotions.
- Feeling angry or fear-based emotions without understanding why.
- Feeling as though you are spiraling out of control based on your emotions.
- Not being able to understand why you feel the way you do.
- Not being able to identify exactly how you feel.
- Using substances such as drugs or alcohol to numb the pain or cope with the inability to control your emotions.

These symptoms can develop gradually over time. The causes for the inability to control your emotions vary and often it is children who experience great difficulty with how to regulate their emotions. They prove this by whining or throwing temper tantrums when they feel angry or distressed. Conditions associated with the inability to control your emotions are as follows:

- Alcohol abuse
- ADHD - attention deficit hyper disorder
- Antisocial personality disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Delirium

- Diabetes
- Psychosis
- Drug abuse
- Post-traumatic stress disorder - PTSD
- Low blood sugar problems
- Depression or postpartum depression

Long term treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy, prescription drugs, and other counseling techniques are used to help people with their emotions. The inability to control your emotions is diagnosed by a psychiatrist or professional by taking and reviewing your health history while evaluating your current symptoms. The treatment for this depends upon each individual's severity level. This may include medications and psychotherapy which require long-term treatment for the individual to be able to regulate and understand their emotions so that they can control them.

This information is not to be replaced by a professional opinion or diagnosis. The information provided in this chapter is to help you understand if you do have a problem with your emotions so that you can get the special help you need.

Chapter Summary

This chapter may have seemed a bit confusing. However, it is essential to understand that all emotions are drawn or stemmed from four main emotions: love, fear, anger, and happiness. To simplify everything, we condensed these four emotions into two - love and fear. However, love and fear are the emotions Elisabeth Kubler-Ross observed as being the foundation for our many emotions. There are many theories which try to explain where our emotions actually stem from. Some people have the opinion that every emotion is their own and don't represent any initial or foundational emotion. However, regardless of which theory you chose to believe, it's important to have a baseline and understand that by controlling your base emotions, you can learn to master all of them. As discussed, the dangers of not being able to control your emotions can result in serious mental health disorders and a greatly increased level of stress in one's life. With that said, on a normal basis or reality some emotions are not to be dealt with and are meant to be accepted and regulated based on the given situation, such as if you can or cannot control the outcome or scenario.

In this chapter you learned:

- When to control your emotions and when not to (briefly).
- Which emotions are the foundation of love and which are of fear.
- The four main components of all our emotions.
- What the dangers are if we do not learn to understand and manage our emotions effectively.
- The causes of our inability to control our emotions.

In the next chapter, you will learn about the emotion involving happiness. We will look closely at issues surrounding happiness such as what exactly happiness is, how we obtain it, when we should control it and when we shouldn't, and what the advantages and disadvantages are revolving around happiness.

Chapter Three: Happiness

People often define happiness as a euphoric feeling inside them that they can't help but externalize. It comes in forms of laughter, smiling, silliness, and hyper attitudes. Happiness is subjective in the fact that one person may be extremely happy about one thing while another person may experience opposite emotions if they were in the same situation.

The real definition of happiness is that it's a feeling someone experiences when something is good in their lives. Happiness is a sense of well-being, joy, and contentment. It's normal to feel happy when you gain a promotion at work, you just got engaged, or you have your first child. The real question though is: is happiness a positive emotion? In most cases, it is, in other cases happiness should be controlled and cautiously approached. Like if someone is deceiving you but you just don't know it yet. You go into the relationship feeling on top of the world, then find out later how unhappy you really feel all because you chased the happiness you felt in the beginning. With this being said, it is good to be happy in the moment, but if you aren't careful happiness can be a tricky emotion.

So, let's take a deeper look at the aspects of happiness. First of all, happiness is not a personality trait, nor is it a characteristic someone has permanently. It is a state of mind - like all emotions. Happiness is not to be confused with more intense feelings like joy or euphoria, it is simply just being content and satisfied in the present moment. When it comes to feeling happy it can be both an internal and external experience depending on whether you are feeling happy or showing that you are happy. Pleasure is a feeling most people associate with happiness; however, they are not the same thing.

The main difference between pleasure and happiness is that pleasure is experienced suddenly through eating great food, sexual intercourse, getting a massage, or receiving a compliment. Pleasure is felt momentarily and disappears as fast as it was felt. Happiness, although not permanent, is a more stable state and lasts longer than pleasure does. Although happiness can be felt externally and internally, self-

happiness is a different type of happiness that can be experienced. Self-happiness refers to being completely satisfied with oneself and is generally associated with self-confidence and high self-esteem.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Happiness

The beneficial attributes to happiness are pretty straight forward but did you know there was a downside to feeling happy all the time as well? As much as happiness is a positive emotion it has its side effects as too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. Everything should be felt and experienced in moderation. For example, eating a bowl of ice cream may make you feel better and cool you down if you are warm. But eating it every day can cause some serious sugar problems and dietary health issues. The same goes for experiencing happiness, aside from the fact that happiness is felt after we achieve our goals or have great friendships, imagine if you could never feel sad, angry, or any other emotion. We would never learn from our mistakes.

Here are just a few examples of how being happy all the time can be a bad thing:

1. It can make you less creative

As surprising as this may sound, creative people often get their motivation through feelings of sadness or negative feelings. That's not to say that they cannot be creative without feeling sad or angry, but if someone were to experience happiness all the time, their projects wouldn't have the heart and guts that stem from those difficult emotions. Ever heard a song that spoke to you about how you felt about something? Ever wrote a journal entry or poem that you could only say on paper because you were too afraid to say it out loud? These raw creative moments are the result of tough times and feelings that are the opposite of happiness.

2. Happiness is not meant to be felt in every situation

Emotions are what shape our realities and our minds into how we perceive the world. They help us adapt to change and allow us to make certain decisions based on how we feel about something. If someone were to always be happy, they would ignore the 'warning

signs' of a bad situation and dive in incautiously. Even though happiness encourages us to cooperate with others and see the opportunities in almost every decision we make, it should not be used in certain circumstances. For example, if someone were to pass away and we attended the funeral, being happy would seem insensitive to others. You cannot push away negative feelings with the preconceived notion that everything must be positive and happy if you want true growth. True growth is about accepting the good with the bad and feeling your emotions as they come while learning ways to manage them or sit with them.

3. Some types of 'happiness' are not good for you

Some kinds of happiness may hamper the ability to connect with others. Some kinds of happiness make us feel energetic whereas another form of happiness may make us feel generous. Sometimes, happiness can even slow us down. For example, a form of happiness makes us feel prideful and engaged, then it may hamper our ability to feel empathetic of someone else's feelings. We may feel so happy, that we forget about what our friend may be feeling because we are too busy bragging or being boastful. Another example is that one form of happiness allows us to feel confident. But too much confidence can be a bad thing as it may make us feel entitled or unappreciative of what's right in front of us. While we are looking forward to the next best thing, we forget that sometimes in the moment happiness is where we need to be.

4. Seeking happiness may cause the opposite effect and make you unhappy

It's like when you try to find love or look for love in other people, you almost always end up 'short strawed.' Love - much like happiness - only comes to you when you aren't actively looking for it. When you actively seek happiness, you set expectations that you will find it and when you don't you actually end up more upset than you would be if you just left it alone. One example of seeking happiness is that if you are in a negative mood and you try to get out of it by listening to happy music or watching a show, you may find that it doesn't work. Actually, you may find that your negative emotions just come back stronger when you are no longer

distracted. This is because instead of facing your sadness or anger, or unhappy emotion, you are ignoring it and pushing it away because of the preconceived notion that happiness will trump all emotions.

When it comes to feeling happy, you must never look for it and just learn to feel and appreciate it when it comes. Feel it in a balanced amount, and be mindful of your environment that brings on happiness. One thing is certain, trying to cover up your negative emotions with that of a happy emotion is never going to work as each emotion needs to be understood and dealt with in an appropriate matter. With this being said, we can now look at the very positive effects happiness can have on a person.

By implementing positivity into your life, it is almost certain that success will come easily. However, positivity and happiness may go hand in hand but did you know that it can promote good health as well? Even though there is a time and place for happiness, when you are happy, the benefits that come alongside happiness are greatly impacted by your perceptions. By this I mean sometimes we miss happy scenarios or situations because we are too focused on negative emotions. When an opportunity for happiness arises, embrace it and let it in because the many beneficial side effects are as follows:

1. Happiness increases your heart health

A thoroughly researched 2005 study found that happiness decreased heart stress by lowering heart rate and blood pressure. In a 2008 study, it was found that patients with coronary artery disease showed signs of having a healthier and stronger heartbeat. A 2010 study assessed 2,000 Canadians and asked them questions related to stress. The ones that shared happy emotions like excitement, contentment, and enthusiasm were rated on a scale of one to five of their overall happiness levels. Ten years later, the 2,000 participants were revisited and the results showed that the happier ones of the group were less likely to develop coronary artery disease. For each happier participant, tests had shown that their risk of heart disease was 22% lower than the average stressed person.

2. Immunity strength results from happiness

In 2003, research was gathered to have 350 adult volunteers to be exposed to the common cold. Before the experiment, researchers had called the participants a number of six times in two weeks to find the ones that experienced the most positive emotions - energetic, pleasant, calm, enthused. Five days into quarantine, the individuals who experienced positive happy emotions were less likely to catch the common cold or experience any flu-like symptoms.

3. Happiness cures stress levels

Most times stress is inevitable, so in a 2009 study, researchers tested the theory of happy emotions and how they affect stress. The study consisted of causing stress to some psychology students to see how they would react. The test consisted of these students answering questions related to how they experienced positive emotions like enthusiasm and pride. Then they were hooked up to an EKG - electrocardiogram - and told that their professor would evaluate their responses based on answering difficult statistical questions. Throughout the process, the hearts of the happiest individuals recovered from the stressful situation more quickly than the ones who experienced more negative emotions.

4. Happiness causes fewer aches and pains in the body

In 2001, a study was tested to ask participants to rate their positive emotions such as happiness. Five weeks later, they were asked how much of their negative emotions caused muscle aches, dizziness, and heartburn. The participants who reported feeling happy emotions at the beginning of the study have shown to be more healthy and less achy than the ones that had said they were unhappy. The result of the study was that the people who reported feeling happier actually seemed to experience little to no pain over the course of the study and their existing symptoms of pain seemed to get better.

5. Feeling happy promotes life longevity

Positive emotions and happiness were linked to greatly increase and strengthen the life expectancy of an individual. In 2011, a study asked people ranging in age 52-79 about their overall

happiness and positive emotions. The elders that reported feelings of excitement and contentment were 35% less likely to die in five years than the reported unhappier elders.

While happiness has many great benefits, the disadvantages of this emotion should not be ignored. The above list is not a complete list of benefits, but the bottom line is that happiness can increase mental and physical health if experienced in a balanced manner. So how do we experience more happiness in our lives?

How We Control Happiness and When We Shouldn't

The question is not about whether we should or shouldn't control happiness, but rather that happiness is a choice. Every moment in our lives, we can choose to be in the moment and we can choose how to react to what happens in the present. In some cases, like celebrations, a good memory, or when we experience things we like, happiness is necessary. In other cases, like the death of a loved one, an insensitive joke, or breakup from a lover are situations where happiness is unnecessary. Some people have a more difficult time being happy - those with depression or other mood disorders - which in this case can make choosing to be happy a problem. For those of you that struggle with happiness, here are a few ways you can alter your perception in order to take control of your own happiness.

1. Try

Whatever amount of effort you decide to put in to become happier counts. Whether you just smile at yourself in the mirror, or hold a friend's hand, or even put on your favorite tunes, every little bit counts. Don't punish yourself if you feel unhappy in happy moments or if you feel happy in inappropriate moments. Just be patient with yourself and be aware of what makes you happy so that you can practice the action to make you feel happier later.

2. Cherish little moments

The question arose earlier when it was a good time to be happy. If you struggle with feelings of happiness think back to when someone grabbed you a coffee randomly or ran your bath for you.

Maybe the kitchen was cleaned so you didn't have to clean it yourself, or your shoulder was stroked out of affection. Were you complimented on your worst day, or did someone go out of their way to spend time with you? Cherish these little moments because oftentimes they get dismissed. These are the moments where happiness is appropriate.

3. Let yourself feel

When we are upset and someone does something for us, or we do something for ourselves in an effort to be happy, we tend to ignore the good feelings that come with the interaction. Some people ignore good feelings because they are so used to feeling down and upset, others fear happiness because of the chemicals our brains release while we feel happy. For whatever reason it may be that you struggle to control happiness, you must be aware of how you are feeling and amplify it. So, if you feel sad, force yourself to cry and the same goes for happiness. If you feel happy, smile really big or force a chuckle and even a laugh. By doing this you are training your brain that you are in control of your own emotions and happiness is one of them.

4. Practice compassion

The easiest way to practice compassion is to close your eyes and meditate on feeling compassionate towards someone or yourself. Self-compassion is perhaps one of the most important feelings that increase the ability to feel and maintain happiness. When you meditate, you can understand it. When you can understand it, you can act on it, and by acting on it, you will genuinely feel happier. This process is about controlling your happiness rather than letting it control you. In this sense, I mean that happiness can take over, in which you may feel overwhelmed. Meditation is perhaps the best thing you can do when practicing with controlling levels of happiness - especially in certain situations.

There is no time where it is right or wrong to feel happy. As happiness is a subjective feeling, it means that everyone feels happy in different moments or situations. So when **shouldn't** you feel happy? When happiness doesn't feel fitting to your given situation. When **should** you feel happy? Whenever you can and as much as you can. Most

of the time happiness comes in forms of excitement and joy or contentment and satisfaction. Other times it can creep up on you in the worst times like if you are having a fight with your ex and a smile pops on your face. As much as you try to control it, it just happens. For some people happiness or actions resulting from happiness such as a laugh or a smile is someone's way to handle and manage stressful events. This is not a bad thing, however, it can come off as insensitive to other people. If you learn to work on your communication, even in your darkest moments, your overall happiness level will increase.

How to Develop Happiness

Most people think obtaining things like money, power, materials, and relationships should make them happy. But the truth is that true happiness comes from within. This means that as much as tools and materials or people can make someone happy, it lasts a short while until the item gets old, you run out of money, or your honeymoon phase ends.

Here are ways to develop true happiness in the moment (externally and internally):

1. Be with people who make you smile and laugh

As dogs share the same fleas, so do people (not fleas, more like traits) which means that the more you surround yourself with happy and positive people, the more you will feel that same energy.

2. Stay true to yourself

Understanding yourself is the first step to understanding your true morals and values. Don't be influenced by people who make you second guess your own nature and intuition. Everything you believe in is yours and that matters. So, to be truly happy, you must stick to your own values and beliefs which will help you feel better about yourself and keep you from making moral mistakes.

3. Accept the good with the bad

Negativity is good in moderation. So, to be happy in the good times and to be sad in the dark times is normal and a part of human nature. When you accept the good with the bad, you will feel less stressed and more in control of yourself and with your

life. Feeling in control promotes empowerment which overall makes you feel happier.

4. Do things you enjoy doing

Whether this is jumping on your bed like a child, dancing like an 'idiot,' making jokes, singing, writing, knitting, rollerblading, etc. Do something you love doing at least once a day. When you practice doing the things you enjoy, your happiness level increases in which you may feel a sense of accomplishment. Remember to reward yourself through all your accomplishments as well, as this can also lead to feeling happy.

5. Find your passion or desire

This goes hand in hand with doing things you love. Find the one thing (or many things) you excel at naturally and chase that dream. Make it your life goal that you will become the next famous author, or well-known actor or actress. Believe that you will be the next astronaut or air-show pilot. When you shoot for your passion, every day will seem as though you have the purpose to move forward and strive to complete your end goals and will bring happiness into your life.

6. Enjoy the simple pleasures in life

Simple pleasures are things like spending time with family, eating your favorite treat, having downtime, connecting deeper with your most valued relationships, etc. These simple pleasures in life will help you feel balanced with your life, thus resulting in the feelings of joy and contentment.

7. Change is good, not scary

A lot of the time, people are scared of change because they fear the unknown. When you look at the unknown as an opportunity to grow and experience happiness, you will no longer be afraid of it. Happiness associated with change is all about your perception of the change that lies ahead. Sometimes change doesn't feel good, but it has to happen in order for you to experience personal growth and life engagement.

Although, not a complete list of how to develop happiness in your life, if you practice these suggestions, you might start to feel happier every day. Happiness is a deeper feeling that takes work for some

people. Other people already have happiness in their lives but whichever person you are, these tools will help you become happier which leads to being more successful in your goals. Challenges will arise and happiness is about being okay with the obstacles and overcoming them one day at a time.

Chapter Summary

As mentioned, happiness is not a permanent emotion and is not characterized by a certain trait that an individual possesses. It is felt in the moment when something good is experienced and can contain other feelings such as joy, contentment, excitement, calmness.

In this chapter you learned:

- The difference between happiness and pleasure
- What happiness really is
- The benefits and shortcomings of happiness
- When happiness is inappropriate
- How to control it if needed
- How to develop it

In the next chapter, you will learn about sadness and what sadness really is - when it's bad, when it's good and how to overcome it when it is inappropriate. Sadness is the opposite of happiness, but it also has its benefits and disadvantages which you will also learn in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Sadness

Sadness is the opposite of happiness and also has its benefits and downfalls. You might be thinking; how can sadness be beneficial? This way of thinking makes sense because we are taught that negative emotions - like sadness - are bad and should be avoided at all costs. However, a little negativity never hurt anyone and there are positive effects that stem from being present with our sadness when we need to be. Sadness is an emotion that we feel naturally in response to emotional or physical pain. Healthy sadness usually disappears once the pain is dealt with or solved; however, unhealthy sadness often leads to depression. Depression is a state where the individual feels sad all the time and loses interest in activities they used to enjoy. As difficult as it can normally be to get out of bed or do something when you are feeling miserable, depression lasts long-term unless corrected. The behaviors associated with sadness are crying, social isolation, and low energy.

Although sadness can turn into depression, it is not depression at all. Sadness is only a symptom of depression but there are many differences between the two. The main difference between the two is that sadness can be defined by something that triggered it and depression is a daily feeling without any cause to that feeling.

Many people try to avoid feeling sad and miserable because we are taught to fight against these emotions. This is because many parents try to shush a crying baby, discipline whining, and instinctively tell our children that they are fine and don't need to cry. Parents don't do this intentionally, but because so many of us do (because of the way we were brought up), we are actually sending the message that crying is bad and should be avoided altogether. But, is that the only reason we are afraid to feel sad?

One of the benefits of feeling sad is that the emotion in itself reminds us that we have meaning and purpose. What makes us sad are usually the things we care most about and that are important to us. We may feel sad because a loved one (person or even animal) has passed away, or it could be that our children are behaving inappropriately

which frustrates us. In all these scenarios, we feel sad because we care about those involved. We care that our children grow up with a clear head on their shoulders, we care about our spouses if they are upset, and we care about the ones we needed to say goodbye to. Most people avoid these feelings of sadness because we have this illogical reasoning that strength lies in the power to suppress our sadness. It doesn't. Studies have proven that by suppressing our sadness, we will actually feel more depressed and nothing will be solved. So, don't suppress the sadness, embrace it and learn exactly why it is that you are sad because from that comes the pure and instinctive strength that we all have inside of us.

The question rearises of why are we afraid to feel sad? For some people, it is the fear that the feelings they suppressed from before will become overwhelming and hard to control. For example, as children, we depend on the guidance of our peers to grow into who we are going to be. We depend on our parents to protect us from danger and teach us morals that we will live with throughout our lives. Now, if we had an inattentive or neglectful parent, we had to learn these things on our own which may have given us painful memories that brought on difficult emotions to control. The instinctive thing to do was to suppress them because we were taught that feeling sad was unacceptable. We then carry this sadness with us most of our lives, thus leading to the fear of feeling sad because of the painful experiences brought on by these 'bad' emotions to begin with. This type of fear can lead us to cut off all ties or reminders of sadness in the attempt to defend ourselves against the painful circumstances. The behaviors that we have learned limits our happiness or opportunities for our future. An example of this is that we will push people away to avoid being hurt, we will avoid helping someone who is sad for the misguided attempt to protect ourselves from their sadness. Some people dive into work as a means to avoid being hurt or thinking too much about their situation, or they may use substances as a defense mechanism which only works temporarily. In an attempt to enjoy your life by pushing away your emotions, you are actually pushing yourself away from life itself.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Sadness

Although there are many strengths of sadness, there are also many downfalls if you don't learn when to sit with your emotion and when to control it. If your feelings of sadness spiral out of control, you may start to develop signs of depression which the consultation of a doctor and the care of a counselor will be needed to reverse the effects of.

When sadness is not controlled, it can do much damage. When we don't learn how to sit with it or fight against it when appropriate, it can cause harm to our minds and our body's. So when sadness isn't controlled and when we haven't learned to sit with it, or when it takes over, what damage is it really causing? Here are the disadvantages to what sadness can do to you:

1. Other negative feelings may arise

Sadness can bring on anger, bitterness, impatience, ignorance, irritation, jealousy, and many other negative feelings. Whether your sadness is a result of something small, a bunch of small things, an overload of stress, or one really big thing, it can bring on many unwanted feelings of despair and bitterness. For example, your mood is depressed and your friend calls to vent to you. In an effort to give the best advice, your mood will disrupt your intentions and you may come off as harsh. Then with this harsh attitude, your friend may feel victimized thus resulting in a confrontation. If you went into the conversation not being sad, it would probably have gone a lot differently.

2. Suspicion and irrational reasoning

Being upset can make you seem bitter and judgmental. Bitterness and sadness take away your integrity and sensibility which results in your fears becoming irrational and your suspicions having no real truth behind them. Sadness can leave you blowing things out of proportion and reacting on impulse rather than being rational and logical about the situation.

3. Sensitivity, self-pity, and victimhood

Sadness can make you selfish in the sense that you dismiss others' joy, suffering, or needs because yours are more important due to

your sadness or frustrations. When someone tries to give you advice, you may take it wrong because your mind is not being logical or reasonable. This results in you acting like the victim because you are extremely sensitive to other's opinions and criticism - whether it be constructive criticism or feedback. When you already feel low, any little thing could blow you over the top and so your sensitivity in a depressive state becomes over-sensitive.

4. Temptations

In an effort to trump your sadness, you may fall into habits and temptations no matter how big or small, such as eating a whole pail of ice cream, or abusing drugs and alcohol. This is because your inner critic (or inner devil) waits for you to be weak so it can present your mind with ideas full of temptation. With you being illogical in your reasoning, the ability to control your temptations has become thin. The reason your mind goes here is that you may have given in to all your temptations before and experienced a better mood. However, this only lasts until the 'high' of the temptation is gone and all you are left with is the continuing habit which creates a long-term problem.

These downfalls of sadness may all seem like 'common sense' to you, but in truth, we all do it when we are at our weakest. The number one goal is to ignore our temptations, find our triggers and fight against what keeps us in this state. Only then will you be able to learn how to be with your sadness when you need to and how to control it when it's appropriate to do so.

The reason it is crucial for you to understand the good and bad with sadness is so that you don't fall into the trap of what society and the media is telling you or trying to make you believe. Everywhere, we see self-help books that are titled "how to get what you want through a positive attitude" or "Learn positive behaviors and say goodbye to anger and sadness forever." What these self-help books are trying to do is brainwash your mind into thinking that the only way to grow personally and become better is to act upon positive emotions and be positive. This is false because as a person, we need to feel our negative emotions. We can't push them aside and pretend they aren't there. Sometimes, your

negative emotions are needed for success as well. Here are just a few benefits to happiness and why it's so important to feel sad when you need to.

1. Enhances memory

In a recent study, researchers had found that on rainy days or on days that someone was in a bad mood, they had a better recollection of details and objects that they had seen. On a good day with positive emotions, objects and details were missed. With this study, it says that a positive mood impairs or diminishes our attention and memory while a sad or bitter mood does the opposite.

2. Triggers motivation

While in the moment, sadness may not make you feel motivated or inspired, but it can make you realize what went wrong and how you can fix it. Thus, leaving you feeling motivated. When we feel happy, we try to maintain this and often feel as though if we are already happy, then we don't need to change anything. Sadness brings on the want for a change.

3. In some cases, sadness improves social interactions

If you are feeling sad then you may reach out to others that make you feel happier or someone who can relate to you without expecting you to change the way you feel. If someone else is sad and reaches out to you, you can recall your sad feelings from past experiences and be relatable to them.

4. Enhances creativity

Feeling sad or angry can result in playing, writing, painting, and drawing more detailed and raw material. Artists of all sorts feed on their raw and sad emotions to create a masterpiece because it's what's said in their songs, writing or drawing that others are too afraid to say. Also, when you are sad and if you are more of a hands-on person (woodworking, metalworking, mechanic, knitter, etc.) you may find that putting your feelings into your work helps you with your overall project.

We can learn a lot about our emotions if we learn how to pay attention to them. When we are sad, we can learn why and what makes our sadness important so that we can work on making ourselves feel

better. Learning to balance your sadness can really help you figure out what makes you who you are and who you want to be. It opens doors for creativity and also helps you figure out your triggers and what you lean towards when you feel at your darkest moments.

Sitting with Sadness

In places like funerals, people may experience a little anxiety, not for the presence of the deceased but for the feeling of sadness taking up the entire room. For some people, it's the feeling that they need to be strong for others and to cheer people up because they are sad. The resolution of these fears is that you need to understand no matter what type of situation you are in, that you cannot fix someone's sadness. You can't really fix your own either instead, you must ride the waves of your emotions and be with them as they are a part of you. When you try to block them out or hide them through temptations, you put stress on your mind and body which causes symptoms like depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, etc.

The trick about being with your emotions such as sadness is you have to be willing to let them flow. In order to do this, you must feel comfortable experiencing them. You can only be comfortable with your sadness or other emotions if you learn about them. What can you expect from feeling this way? What happens when you feel sadness? What can you do to help let these emotions flow or become manageable? Being around supportive people that will not judge you for feeling the way you do helps as well, as this helps us relate and feel important. Keep the following in mind:

- Be aware of what you say to yourself and others when experiencing sadness. Examples of these are; *You shouldn't feel sad; It's not that big of a deal; It's time to move past this.* By saying these things to yourself or someone else, it may leave you and them feeling more upset and ashamed for how and why they feel that way. This only promotes hiding from our sadness resulting in bad habits.

- Your job isn't to fix something, it's to be supportive. Say or do things that will help.
- Give time to sadness. Be patient with the feeling as there is no given time frame for how long a person should grieve or be sad. The uncomfortable emotions will set in and dissipate on their own time and when the individual is ready.
- Show physical comfort and take care of them. If they need help, they will ask, or you will know. Sometimes all someone needs is a shoulder to cry on, a nice warm cup of tea, and the realization that someone is here if they need.

These strategies are not only helpful to other people but make sure that when you are sad you do the same thing for you that you would do for someone else. Remember to take care of yourself, reach out to others for support, and give yourself time to heal or overcome your sadness. Make sure to communicate your needs to those that will help and support you. Practice being aware that you are sad, and learn to observe the impulses that try to arise. Be one with yourself and stay compassionate to your sadness. This is how you can truly be one with yourself and your sadness.

How to Control Sadness

In certain situations, like funerals, when someone else is sad, when you have lost something you care about, or even if you just want to be sad out of the blue, it is okay to feel sad. However, in cases like birthdays, family get-togethers, nights out with friends, or situations where you should be happy, is when controlling your sadness will come in handy. Here are some ways you can benefit from controlling your sadness:

1. Identify where your sadness is coming from

Whether it's triggered sadness, or depression, identifying it is the first step to take in order to control how you are feeling. Do you feel sad over what someone said? Over what happened a few days ago? Or, have you felt general feelings of sadness for some time

now? Sadness is meant to be short-term, but if it's depression you are facing, it can go on for a long period of time. If there was something that triggered your sadness, just identify it, then figure out how you can (if you can) reverse the trigger.

2. Banish the enemies of happiness

The enemies of happiness consist of you looking for happiness in someone else, allowing your emotions to take over, look for positivity externally, and ignoring the signs of inner tension and conflict. When you allow yourself to do these things, you are only giving yourself short-term happiness and long-term sadness. So, do the opposite - Don't allow your emotions to consume you, take care of yourself, look for strengths in yourself that are most important to you, find internal happiness, and take care of inner conflict and tension.

3. Implement well-being

In short, this generally means to take care of yourself. Respect yourself and follow your instincts through knowing what you are most certain about. Well-being is defined as a balanced state of mind, body, and spirit in which you feel internally content, at peace and emotionally unburdened. To do this, you simply need to set worthy long-term goals, do something you love, be open-minded, learn from your mistakes, and plan for your future without letting fear get in the way.

By following these three steps, you will have mastered how to control your sadness and be able to sit with them. It's like killing two birds with one stone. Self-care is one of the most important aspects of life. You need to be able to understand yourself well enough to take care of the emotions like sadness that consumes you. Remember that sadness comes and goes but self-growth and personal development take and last a lifetime.

Chapter Summary

Sadness is a feeling much different than depression, as sadness is short term and the other is not. If you start to feel long-term sadness, you may want to consult with a professional about your symptoms to learn ways to cope with your depression. This chapter explained what sadness is and how to control it when you absolutely need to. More aspects of what you learned in this chapter are:

- How to sit with sadness - and when.
- What the many benefits of sadness are.
- What the downfalls of sadness are.
- Why we think sadness is a bad thing.
- Steps to gain control of your sadness and why it's beneficial to do so when appropriate.

In the next chapter, you will learn about fear and why we need fear in order to succeed in our lives, how fear is beneficial and why too much fear can be bad. You will also learn how to control fear so that you can be positive with change and learn to spot opportunities without being fearful of them.

Chapter Five: Fear

Fear, also known as apprehension, worry, anxiety, fright, or panic is a natural response our bodies go through when we are faced with perceived danger. Fear is separated into two different responses - biochemical and emotional. Biochemical being a general or overall response and emotional being strictly individual.

First, let's take a look at the **biochemical** fear response, which refers to how our body reacts physically to fear. When we are faced with a perceived threat such as an object, situation, person, or place, our brain sends chemicals such as cortisol, epinephrine, and adrenaline into our bloodstream which causes a mass amount of physical symptoms. These symptoms include:

- Excessive sweating
- Heart rate increase
- Tunnel vision
- Hot flashes or chills
- Goosebumps
- A butterfly sensation in our stomach
- Quickened breathing rate.

If there is no threat that is happening, these symptoms are known as an anxiety attack. Anxiety and fear are not the same thing because anxiety is a disorder in which a bunch of 'anxiety attacks' happen whether or not there is a perceived threat or danger happening. Fear is when there is actually something dangerous happening and someone can feel frightened or scared due to the threat. The physical symptoms are called the 'fight or flight' response. It helps our bodies become prepared for what we are about to face. If we need to run, the adrenaline helps us run faster, if we need to hide, cortisol and epinephrine chemicals help us stay still and quieter longer. This biochemical effect is an automatic reaction that is pivotal for our survival and has helped

many of our ancestors live so that this generation can fully thrive to our full potential.

The **emotional** fear response is strictly personal and voluntary and occurs when we seek this feeling out as with an adrenaline rush. Fear involves some of the same chemicals that are released for positive emotions such as excitement and pleasure. These chemicals include serotonin and endorphins. You can get an emotional fear response by watching a scary movie, participating in extreme sports like mountain boarding or skydiving, and any other induced thrilling situation. If someone were to have an anxiety disorder, normally they would avoid fear induced situations at all costs. Depending on the person, fear can be felt as a positive emotion or a negative one. The physical sensations you get from the biochemical response are the same as the emotional response. The only difference is for emotional reactions in which the individual is going out of their way to feel it.

Depending on the individual, fear can be brought on by a number of things. Fear can be brought on by trauma or recurring thoughts and images related to their trauma (PTSD) or they can be afraid of one particular thing like a spider. Some people suffer from uncertainty and control while others fear change. Some people may experience what's called conditioned fears. This is when a negative experience becomes connected to the fear we feel and we become afraid of it happening again like a car accident or a panic attack. Conditioned fears can also be formed when someone else tells us about a negative experience and so we instinctively fear the object, person, or place. For example, if we were raised to be told that a certain gender or group of people were dangerous and that we should stay away (like sociopaths) and so automatically, we would avoid them at all costs due to our fear of them. Whatever fear someone might obtain, scientists are still unsure whether fear is behavioral or if it's something our brains are genetically wired to feel.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Fear

The question about fears is whether we should conquer them, control how we react because of them, or just be in the moment with them. Most people would prefer to avoid this emotion all together because of their biochemical response. Other's enjoy this emotion as stated in the emotional response section above. Before we can make decisions based on whether or not we should be okay with feeling fearful, we should probably understand the benefits of it first.

1. Physical changes in the brain happen during the learning process

We are always learning in everything we do. Every emotion we experience, every action we do, every thought we have, we are always learning. Fear can stop us from accomplishing our goals, make us miss opportunities, and bring on anxiety disorders. It can also help us move forward, give us new perspectives, and help us develop a courageous attitude. In every aspect of fear you are learning something new or developing new habits. Our brains develop neuroplasticity which is responsible for changing the brain's shape and form over the course of our lives. As long as we are fearful and continue to learn, the neuroplasticity will continue to change our brains for the better.

2. Newness encourages our brains to discover

Our first instinct is to fight or run away from what scares us. If we choose to fight and overcome our fears, we are learning new things. New experiences or change increases awareness and curiosity about what's happening. The process of learning to do something you haven't done before (or haven't done in a long time), activates the brain's eagerness to explore and discover new solutions. This helps the brain seek reward and gives us the motivation to learn how to overcome our fears or dive into the newness of it which only makes us learn. As stated in the previous benefit, learning creates healthy physical brain changes.

3. Risk-taking creates a feel-good physical response

This stems from the emotional part of fear. Some people seek to create an adrenaline rush because it makes them physically feel better due to the risks they take. This type of arousal is the 'good' type of fear directed towards personal growth through

exhilarating experiences. Facing your fears because you want to and are ready to do so makes your brain produce and release feel-good chemicals into your bloodstream, such as endorphins, oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin.

4. Fear helps you concentrate

Uncertainty and not knowing what's going to happen scares a lot of people. For this reason, people usually think and plan so that they can be aware of at least a little bit of control in an attempt to try to know what's going to happen. Planning, problem-solving, and organizational skills require your full focus and attention. So, being fearful actually helps you become more focused so that you can plan ahead and get what needs to be done, done.

5. Vulnerability is psychologically beneficial

Have you ever felt your most vulnerable self when you are frightened or scared? That is because, through uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure, vulnerability is also the place where innovation, creativity, and change is born. Fear helps you acknowledge your vulnerabilities which essentially develops a sense of awareness and mindfulness. Mindfulness has strongly been linked to physical and emotional health. The more times you become mindful of your weaknesses, other emotions like guilt and shame will lose their control over you which also help promote physical and psychological well-being.

The key to overcoming your fears is by learning the advantages and disadvantages of the emotion. Although the symptoms from fear can be uncontrollable and uncomfortable, once you figure out why fear is happening, you will be able to make a choice on what to do with your emotion. That could be conquering them, controlling our fear-based emotions, or just being with them physically allowing them to take their course.

Fear can disrupt your thinking patterns and take over your life if you let it. This is because society has taught us that fear is a weakness and should be avoided. As you have learned already, fear has great benefits to help you succeed in life. Also, fear can ruin your life if you let the emotions get the best of you. So, what exactly are the weaknesses of fear?

1. Fear makes you strive for perfection

Because fear is known as a weakness, we often try to avoid being afraid or becoming scared by being perfect. Most people don't like to feel criticized, be rejected or make mistakes that end in great failure, so they will do everything to avoid it. Perfection is the result of the avoidance which actually separates you from getting what you really crave which is to be known, loved, and accepted for who you truly are.

2. Fear causes you to settle

Although taking risks can be exhilarating and beneficial, if you give in to fear you start to convince yourself that your dreams and goals aren't as important as what you have now. This results in you feeling like you have to settle and this is as good as it gets. Mostly, this stems from the uncertainty of going after what you want and deserve because the future is so unknown and unpromising. Settling isn't realistic, it's just a symptom that fear has taken control.

3. You make too many commitments

Fear can cause you to say yes to things you wish you didn't out of the fear of rejection. Continuing this behavior adds stress and pressure into your life which causes many physical and mental health issues. When you are fearful of rejection or disappointment, you may fall into the habit of people-pleasing and self-sacrificing habits.

4. Fear promotes unhealthy habits

You may fall into drugs, alcohol, and other unhealthy habits or substances which result in addictions to numb the emotions that stem from fear. These sub-emotions include feeling helpless, hopeless, restless, sad, angry, and lonely or even tired. By delving into these unhealthy substances and addictions to numb the pain from these emotions, you are only putting a bandaid or cover up on the wound. You need to find the trigger or the root cause of these emotions before you can start dealing with them (more on overcoming fear later in this chapter).

5. Fear makes you paralyzed

Have you ever stayed longer than you should have in an abusive

relationship? Maybe you let your boss take advantage of you when you know it's wrong. Did you ignore your instincts when it came to setting boundaries with your friends or family? This happens because we fear the unknown. We ignore the inner voice that screams at us to leave or to take control over certain situations in our lives. You don't do what your intuition screams at you to do because the truth is that you are terrified of what happens next. The other side of fear is possibility and strength. The future holds literally anything you want it to.

6. You become very controlling

Fear can control you and so to take control of your fear back, you think that controlling everything and everyone around will make it somehow go away. This is false. Fear brings on the belief that everything is out to get you, it makes you skeptical and develops the need to micromanage your environment. The truth is that the only thing you really should control is fear itself. When you do, you can accept what is, let go of what was, and look forward to what's to come.

As fear has its many benefits and weaknesses, it doesn't have to control your life. As you become more familiar with fear, you can make the right decisions on what to do with it. The truth is that we can never slow down or avoid our emotions, but we can decide how to take them and what to do about them. So, when do we sit with fear? How do we overcome our fears? Why shouldn't we control our fear? The answers are yet to come.

Sitting with Fear

Before you can sit with fear and learn to enjoy it and just be present with it, you need to learn why you feel fearful. When you learn what's causing your symptoms, you can then figure out what the best method is - challenging it or sitting with it. In this part of the chapter, you will learn how to sit with the feeling of fear so that you can decide on if you should overcome your fears or if you should just be in the moment with them.

1. Acknowledge that the fear is there. Understand that it can be conquered

Whatever the fear may be - a child going to school for their first time, walking down a dark alley at night, someone being told no one can help them, or a life-threatening experience - the fear is real. Fear can come in many forms from big to small but the symptoms revolving the fear can be debilitating. Acknowledging your fear is the first step to overcoming it because fear actually gives you the motivation to find solutions around the problem. Knowing this should calm you down.

2. Acceptance of your fear

First, take a step back (if you can) and understand if your fear is life-threatening, or if it's manageable. Understand that even though the fear is real, accepting that it's there can help you relax about it in the moment. The worst thing to do when it comes to fear is to freak out, so be calm and accept that you are feeling afraid.

3. Gain perspective

A different way to look at things will help you calm yourself and make the fear not seem like such a big deal. For example, have you ever watched something as a kid like a movie that was so scary, you avoided watching it until now as an adult? Then you watched it again (by accident or on purpose) and it wasn't actually scary at all? This is gaining a different perspective, ask yourself a few questions about the fear in order to see a different view and calm down:

- a. Are you really in danger?
- b. Will this fear kill you?
- c. If the worst was likely to happen, what would that look like?

4. Some things fear can never reach

When we are involved in our fears, we may overthink everything by imagining the worst-case scenarios. It may feel as though you have no control and fear ruins everything. Take a minute to stop and understand that fear cannot touch everything. An example of this is the book written about Alistair Urquhart. It was a book

about torture in the Second World War. Alistair suffered through being starved, beaten, threatened, and mocked. However, when it was all over, Alistair said that through the fear and these negative experiences, the punishers could never get to his mind because, in his mind, he was free. Figure out what your fear does not have control over, which will create confidence and reassurance of how courageous and strong you are through the face of fear.

5. Be with your fear

When we are afraid, we often don't acknowledge our strength in it. As we are sitting there or running from our perceived threat, we are acknowledging that we know what we need to do to be safe. However, continuously running or fighting fear will hold you back so instead, know that overcoming your fear is going to be difficult. Break the fear down into obstacles that you can overcome. For example, if you are afraid of heights, start small and work your way up to the very top (literally) making each step to get there one step at a time until you aren't afraid of it anymore.

6. Own it

In order to own your fear, you must do two things. First, make a list of all your fears and rate them from scariest to least scary. Then, make another list of your favorite tips in this list that you have read (or bookmark this page). When you have these tips to look back on, you can gain the motivation and the attitude that you can and will conquer your fears. Either by sitting with them or intentionally overcoming them.

Sometimes all you can do is sit with your fears. However, if your situation requires you to overcome and conquer it, then the next steps are the steps for you.

How to Control Fear

Oftentimes fear controls us because we fear the fear itself. We let it take over by doing the opposite of what we should do and our first response would be to avoid it, run from it, or ignore it. These actions actually fuel fear and eventually, you find yourself overrun with some

sort of anxiety disorder. To stop this from happening, or to reverse the anxiety you already potentially have, follow the next five steps:

Step One: Accept the fear

The first step is to start accepting that fear is a part of life. It's a part of you, it's a part of our history and it's a big part of how well we succeed. Acknowledging and accepting that fear is not going anywhere will determine how capable you are of overcoming it.

Step Two: Pinpoint it

Admitting your fears internally or out loud can help you gain an advantage over them and turn your fear into courage and strength. To do this, name what you are afraid of and then view them as opportunities to conquer them.

Step Three: Feel the fear

The worst thing you can do when it comes to your fear is to overthink and try to analyze it. Although this may make you feel better to think about what triggered the fear, it only leaves you more fearful because you are trying to control what happens next. This brings your awareness not to the fear but about the future or past. To really eliminate the feelings involved with your fear, you must be in the present moment with it. Feel your heart race, listen to your overwhelming thoughts, breathe in the panic and breathe out the frustration. When you can do this, you are ready for the next step.

Step Four: Face it

Your fears will only disappear or become manageable when you learn how to face them. This is easier said than done, but you can face your fears through positive self-talk, overcoming them with a friend, or even through exposure therapy. Exposure therapy is when you build up to your fear by overcoming the little steps on how to get there.

Step Five: Practice confronting your fears

Confronting your fears takes practice and over time it's a skill that you can build. Thinking of conquering your fears as a skill that needs to be practiced will help you change your mindset about the given fear and give you the motivation to overcome them.

Controlling our fears is the easy part. Facing them and overcoming them is the hard part. When we try to control them, we can control the way we see them and practice it when we aren't in the midst of the

action so that we can develop the skill for when fear does hit us. Now, when fear sweeps us with symptoms and we feel as though we are paralyzed, we can now draw from this chapter and fully face our fears.

Chapter Summary

Fear is a human emotion that has been developed and evolving since the beginning of time. The fear response was needed in the early stone-age because it helped our ancestors run faster, hide more softly and tackle survival. Nowadays, fear happens whether we like it or not. Learning to accept this factor is one of the first steps in learning how to deal with it.

In this chapter you learned:

- The advantages and disadvantages of coping with and dealing with fear
- Why fear is essential
- How to sit with our fears and when
- How to control fear before it controls you
- What can happen if we don't learn to manage them.

In the next chapter, you will learn about the emotion called disgust. You will learn why disgust is looked down upon and why we feel it, why disgust is essential to have in our lives, and why we don't like dealing with it.

Chapter Six: Disgust

Much like what we learned about in the chapter regarding fear, feelings of disgust can vary depending on the person. Some people can't stand the sight of blood or death, whereas others deal with blood and look at death as part of their profession. Some people have weak stomachs while others have strong stomachs and only get disgusted over sounds or certain sights. We can feel disgusted as a result of input from one, some, or all of our senses.

For example, if we **see** something we don't approve of, we can feel nauseous or sick. If we **feel** something that is slimy or distasteful, we can become over chilled or heated by the feel of it. If we **hear** noises that gross us out, such as someone vomiting, we may feel the urge to vomit ourselves. Disgust is a difficult emotion to define because it can come out of nowhere and it is different for everyone. The upside to disgust is that we can train ourselves out of being disgusted or grossed out such as, we can get over embarrassment by telling ourselves that what we see, hear, feel, taste, and smell are just a figment of our imagination. Or, if we plan to be doctors or people who work in sewers, etc. we can get over our disgust by learning to manage our feelings around it.

The thing about disgust that most people dismiss is that aside from the normal things that disgust us like rotting food, feces, or unnatural bodily functions, we can be disgusted with people or circumstances as well. Science says that disgust largely influences our morals and beliefs. Therefore, disgust also comes from our beliefs. Knowing that poisonous foods or animals should be avoided helped our ancestors in the early ages of society, but now that we have evolved, so has our disgust level. As well as avoiding poisonous things, we now react to what we think will 'poison' our morals or points of interest. This is why you will feel repulsed by the actions or beliefs of others that don't share similar beliefs as you would. Also, this is why disgust is different for everyone because everyone has their own view and beliefs on what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' in a general sense.

Another thing that disgust does, is that it can make you more judgmental. Studies show that people who are disgusted because of their dirty environmental situations are more judgemental. For example, if you have an open mind normally, but walked into your friend's home that had dirty diapers, or moldy food and dishes lying around, your mind would automatically judge your friend without even meaning to or realizing it.

Researchers have found that the feeling of disgust can be so powerful that someone feeling disgusted will do anything in their power to get rid of the feeling as fast as possible. With that being said, we will try to remove ourselves from a situation if we are disgusted from it or go as far to distance ourselves from our relationships due to the strong repulsion.

Although very powerful, who says disgust has to be negative? Did you know there were actual benefits to feeling disgusted? This means that we shouldn't always resort to running from our feelings, but learning to deal with them more appropriately.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Disgust

When we define disgust as something to be proud (or unproud) of, we may think to ourselves, how could disgust be anything more than what it is - a gross feeling. Disgust has many qualities and triggers. Some triggers are obvious such as unhygienic people, animals such as rats or bugs, contamination, and disease. But as mentioned, disgust has its own definition based on the individual. For them it could be that they become disgusted over something that may not bother the average person. However, disgust has a very large amount of social power. Here is why:

1. Cleanliness

When we smell bad or look bad, it is usually signs of uncleanliness or infection. When we feel disgusted due to one of these reasons, it's our brains telling us that we need to shower or see a doctor. In today's society, some people may find it easier to clean up than others. For example, if you lived in the mountains or 'off the grid'

where you have to fetch your own water, it may be more difficult to stay clean or get clean. People with more permanent low moods and those who are diagnosed with depression may find due to their mood, uncleanliness may just not bother them.

2. Forbiddenness or sacredness

In all cultures of the human race, there are invisible rules which we stand by that tell us what should never be done or be said by any means in any given circumstance. Also known as taboos, these usually revolve around religion, sex, death, aggression, cleanliness, food, drugs, etc. For example, in certain religions, one should never criticize the deities or the words and phrases used in holy books. Disgust helps an individual follow these taboos or silent rules of sacredness because if someone else were to do it, we become disgusted as a result and then avoid following their influence.

3. Punishment

No one likes to be punished so disgust can act as a barrier to stop punishments from happening to you. For example, in the field of socialization, if someone is disgusted by one of your actions, they may distance themselves from you or cast you out of their 'clique' altogether. So, disgust is an incentive for most people to avoid that from happening.

4. Relationship Failure

In a sense, if we are repulsed by the person we are with, then chances are we won't stay with them. The benefit of this is that if the relationship wasn't healthy, disgust helps us move past the broken feelings associated with the break-up. On the other hand, if the relationship was healthy, but our partner did something unforgivable that 'disgusted' us, we weigh the impact of what they did to us internally and make a decision based on how we feel. If it isn't forgivable, but the relationship was healthy, then breaking up may become more difficult ending with feelings of sadness and betrayal.

So, how do we deal with disgust? It's more about when we should avoid it or how we should handle it. When it comes to religion and morals, make sure that you don't disrespect anyone's feelings while still

trying to respect yourself. Disgust comes in many forms, but only you can determine what you should do about it because only you know what disgusts you the most.

Along with the benefits mentioned above, disgust is an important emotion not just for its moral value, but because it helps us protect our growth. It also limits us based on what we are disgusted about. It could block new ideas from forming due to the fact that we can become automatically judgemental when we don't try to be. When we are blocked by feelings of disgust, we shatter all pre-existing notions revolving around new growth and personal insight. When it comes to repulsion and displeasure, we must find a balance. Finding a balance of what repulses us will help us figure out whether we need to understand our triggers or listen to our intuition.

One thing about disgust is that it comes in either waves or levels. The smallest amount of disgust compared to when it becomes too much for one to handle strictly depends on the individual feeling the repulsion. What I mean is one person can hear someone vomiting with no problem and for another that same sound can be a trigger for them to fly to the bathroom alongside the vomiting individual and become nauseated themselves. When disgust goes too far, it means that it has taken over your ability to think properly. Equivalent to this, disgust is a good thing when it's just an impulse such as hearing someone vomit makes you want to as well. But, when it goes too far, it impairs your ability to think and act appropriately in a situation.

So, when should you try to overcome disgust? When it has reached the level just before it gets to the point of no return. Overcoming repulsion is not about turning off the initial response (vomiting, feeling sick, becoming dizzy, being judgmental, etc.) it means that you need to acknowledge your disgust, pause to think about it, then determine your next move.

How to Control Disgust

Overcoming disgust is like overcoming anything. Scientists say that after every seven years in a person's life, their mental chemistry and body's start to change. This is why as a child you may have hated

broccoli but now you love it. Our taste buds develop, our hormones change, our body chemistry forms as we age. So, what used to disgust us, may no longer have the same effect as it did when we were younger. This happens naturally and over time of course, but did you know you can actively change how you feel and what you feel just by changing the way you think? When we shift our minds to become more open-minded or rather less caring for certain things, disgust will no longer have power over us. For example, have you ever looked at another relationship and thought, *oh gee, if I was them I would be so far out of that relationship it's not even funny*. Or maybe you have watched a friend dive into the mud or get really messy and dirty and because of your disgust, you thought *what in the world are they doing? They are acting like children. How old are they? Glad I am more mature than that*. Reversing this frame of mind by just not caring what other people do or say based on your own beliefs can really help you let go of the disgust that tries to take over. Instead of seeing a relationship as something you wouldn't dabble into, think that maybe those couples deserve each other and just be happy for them. This will also develop a more open-minded behavior.

The key to overcoming disgust is simply noticing your own initial revulsion involving food, political or religious belief, and even someone else's morals or lifestyles but learning to not judge yourself or someone else for feeling this way. As everyone has their own ways of thinking and going about their lives, so do you and this is not anyone's fault. We are all brought up differently and so we all learn differently. Realize and understand that most distasteful situations are imagined or hypothetical and you do not need to partake in any of it if you don't want to. Some other things you can do to let go of disgust are:

1. Don't let your emotions control the way you think or perceive things

Disgust is formed in the very early stages of your life, as you age, this disgust may (or may not) tie into your values and beliefs - morals. If you tell yourself that you are permitted to feel or **MUST** feel disgusted you become a victim. When you feel victimized, you may feel disgusted with yourself. So, as you can see, when you convince yourself that you're disgusted you are creating a self-

destructing habit that only you can recognize and break if you become aware of it.

2. Act opposite to how you feel

When you sneer or frown it's usually an unintentional or automatic reaction to when you feel judgmental. Some people smirk or develop a 'guilty face.' Know your triggers and pay close attention to what you do and how you act when you are disgusted or judgmental so that you can figure out what the opposing factor may be. The opposite of disgust or judgment is approval, kindness, or even satisfaction. When you catch yourself feeling disgusted, look deep down within yourself for a satisfying memory or feeling so that you can go into the situation with kindness and respect.

3. Don't take things personally - it's not about you

If someone cuts you off in traffic at an intersection, you may feel angry or just plain disgusted. Remember that they have no idea who you are, or what kind of person you are. They may not even be thinking about you at all. So, in this moment (or a similar situation), breathe, reflect, and continue as you were. Acting out of disgust or anger will only escalate the situation and make them become judgmental of you.

4. Be honest with people

When someone has disgusted or upset you with their words or actions, the worst thing you can do is gossip about them or point out their faults. This will only make you feel more disgusted or even resentful in the future about yourself. Pull this person aside, and be honest with them about how you feel. In truth, it can go one of two ways, either the person will understand and respect you, or they won't and will be mad. Remember that either way, all you can control is yourself and your personal well-being.

5. Become mindful of your own wants, needs, and desires

In the long run, you cannot control someone else for acting, feeling, thinking, or saying something. Becoming more mindful of what you want, need, and feel you can be aware of when you feel judgmental or disgusted which will create a sense of clarity. When we have clarity, we develop peace in which feelings of disgust no

longer hold power. In truth, it is very close to impossible to feel peace with disgust at the same time.

When dealing and coping with feelings of disgust and repulsion, no matter what the trigger or cause of it may be, looking at it differently is the most beneficial way to overcome it. When you see disgust as part of your five senses, it won't hold much value to you when it comes to what you believe in. Learn to accept repulsion as an instinctive gesture rather than turning it into a morally unsatisfying lifestyle.

Chapter Summary

Disgust can be temporary or long term. It can be triggered by small things or really big things. It can be seen as a moral engagement or it can be used and thought of as part of your five senses. Everyone's definition of disgust will vary and depend on the individual themselves. What we do know about disgust is that it is easily controllable and if we want to sit with it, we can. It depends on you whether or not you want to do something about it, or sit with it, as disgust isn't an emotion that needs absolute control. It's only an emotion we can learn to feel and think differently about.

In this chapter you learned:

- | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ●What
disgust
is | ●What
to do
about
it | ●What
benefits it
holds in
your life | ●What
weaknesses
it presents | ●Why it
doesn't
need a
whole lot of
attention | ●How to
look at it
differently. |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

In the next chapter, you will learn the real definition of anger and how it can potentially ruin your life if you aren't careful. Also, you will learn how anger can surprise you and help you become an assertive individual so that you feel respected.

Chapter Seven: Anger

Anger - along with happiness, sadness, love, and fear - is one of the core emotions humans experience. Anger can be felt in many ways and is another name for discontent, frustration, rage and bitterness, among others. Unlike other emotions, anger will not dissipate just because it's been let out or unleashed; instead, it just reenacts itself again. If someone does not know how to handle their emotions very well, anger or sadness can be one of the first two emotions to reach the surface in the middle of a crisis or a breakdown. People often see anger as a negative emotion, but it's quite the opposite. It serves as a protective purpose because it is linked to the fight-or-flight response that we feel when we are fearful. When we feel angry, our first instinct is to fight which doesn't necessarily mean to brawl or physically fight. It also means that it works to win cases over in court or in an argument. However, if someone were to be angry all the time or have a short-fuse 90% of the time, stress hormones related to anger will release often. These types of stress hormones can damage neurons in different parts of the brain which are associated with judgment, short-term memory (the hippocampus area), and can weaken the immune system.

The Strengths and Weakness of Anger

Suppressed anger that builds up over time usually leads to anger outbreaks which, if left uncontrolled or unmanaged, can lead to worse things happening such as physical fights and abuse, domestic violence and assault, or even self-harm. But, it's not all bad, anger can help you focus, stay motivated, and help you develop strong relationships. If your anger is not managed properly or controlled in a healthy way, it can get out of hand and control you. Unhealthy symptoms may present themselves such as:

- Chronic headaches
- Digestion issues like
 - abdominal pain

- irritable bowel syndrome
- anxiety
- lack of appetite
- Insomnia or becoming a night owl due to racing thoughts and high sprung energy
- Depression or overwhelming sadness
- High blood pressure
- Heart diseases
- Strokes

The reason repressed anger can hurt you is that it can lead to increased anxiety and bouts of depression. Feeling unable to control your overwhelming emotions when it has reached this point can make you unleash your frustrations towards innocent parties such as children, spouses, and pets. Sometimes people will isolate themselves from family and friends because they are trying to stop themselves from lashing out. This is because they have such a difficult time handling their anger due to the build-up and it being so overwhelming.

People tend to avoid anger because it makes them feel bad, it can be self-destructive, and because more times than not, it makes someone say or do hurtful things they regret later. Anger should not be avoided, instead, it should be learned about and controlled in a healthy way. But, why is it okay to sometimes just be mad for a while? Why is it okay to sit by and let it take over - sometimes? Because, like all emotions, anger has a good side too. Let me explain why.

1. Anger is motivation

Have you ever had the urge to tell someone how you really felt about them? Have you ever just wanted to let loose and say what you haven't said because of your good manners or insecurities? Anger fuels this type of motivation. For example, we may avoid confronting a lover, friend or family member about how they are treating us unless we are truly angry. Or, maybe there has been something you have wanted to do for so long but have been too insecure to do it until you were angry. When used properly, anger

can fuel you to make beneficial changes in your life that you may not feel ready for when you are content.

2. Anger is beneficial to relationships

As the saying goes - the heart grows fonder with time and distance (or something like that), there is also a saying that goes something like this - arguments and fights grow people closer together. This saying (unlike the other one in my opinion), is very true in the sense that when you argue with your significant other, you are teaching and learning each others' boundaries. When you keep your frustrations and anger inside, all you are doing is letting your partner know that what they are doing is okay and so they continue to do whatever it is that makes you angry. This can be very detrimental to any relationship. So, if you use your anger to solve problems other than vent and rage, then a strong and close relationship is what you will have.

3. Anger defines self-insight

As I had mentioned in the first strength of anger, it motivates you. Anger can motivate you for personal growth and self-change when you try to understand the trigger or the root of your anger.

Instead of having an absolute outburst caused by stress and anger suppression, try to figure out what's making you angry, why it made you angry (childhood experience or common sense?) and then how you feel about the problem along with the anger you feel. By really defining these key aspects of your personal anger, you will develop self-insight and figure out your true faults.

Because the truth is, maybe it's not someone else's fault for why you are displeased.

4. Anger decreases violence

This is a double-edged sword, as anger can also promote violent acts. What I mean by anger decreasing the amount of violence that happens in our world and in situations is this: Sometimes people cannot control their actions based on how overwhelming their feelings can be. As a result of this, you might see someone act out of anger and threaten someone or see that things may escalate.

Now, say you don't agree, and out of your own anger towards the situation you go confront the person and diffuse the situation.

Everyone walks away with a non-violent attitude. If you still think that this could be wrong, imagine this: Imagine a world where there was no definition, example, or even emotion that explained anger. What do you think would happen? If anger couldn't be produced because it didn't exist, a lot of people would most likely end up resorting to violence because of our core internal instincts from the beginning of time. Anger can help us learn to control ourselves and deal with confrontation in healthy ways rather than resorting to violence.

5. Anger is a persuasive tactic

This is to be determined and is still in the midst of research, but in one study of negotiation and persuasiveness a larger number of participants made more allowances and fewer obligations when they were enraged or provoked than that of a happy and relaxed person. The reason the science behind this is so complicated is that only some forms of anger can make this happen. Like when you use anger to appear more confident and powerful, you will seem as though you know what you are talking about - without a doubt - and so this tactic works best when your anger becomes justified.

Just like any emotion we feel, a negative emotion doesn't necessarily have to be bad. Also, a positive emotion doesn't always have to be good either. Every emotion should not be judged based on whether it feels good or not because every emotion can be used in the right way. The rest is up to you and how you plan on handling your emotions. What helps is knowing more about emotions so that you can choose whether to act or sit with them.

How to Control Anger

Knowing the benefits and burdens of anger is the first step to controlling your anger as it leaves you with more information than you knew before. However, that's not what is going to stop you from having a sudden outburst when you feel enraged. Why do some people get angrier than others anyways? Maybe you feel as though you get angrier than most people and wonder why others handle their anger so well

while you are left struggling to figure out why anger seems far out of your control. I will tell you why some people are generally angrier than others - people who get easily infuriated have a low tolerance for these types of emotions. This could be because of the label around the negative emotions, or it could have been taught or enforced in their nature. All this means is that the people who get easily frustrated do not feel as though they should have to delve into experiences that annoy them, irritate them, or inconvenience them in any way. Simply put, they feel as though these emotions are a waste of time so they spend all their energy trying not to get angry, then it happens anyways which annoys them even more and so does everything else.

Why are people this way? For a number of reasons, one being genetic. The children who are born more temperamental and difficult to handle usually grow up feeling more irritable and grumpy than the rest. Another reason is that anger revolves around a sociocultural aspect. This means that everywhere we go and almost everything we see or whomever we meet, we are taught from a young age that being angry is a bad emotion and should always be controlled. Like when we are in elementary school, we are taught not to pick on others and don't give in to bullies' attitudes even when you are angry as it won't solve anything. However, science proves otherwise. Due to being told and taught that we should never act on our anger, it becomes a silent emotion that we fear and so we never really understand it. When we don't understand it, we can't control it thus resulting in outbursts. Make sense? So, if this sounds like you or someone you may know, here are some techniques to help you handle and control your anger.

1. Practice relaxation techniques

Things like resting peacefully with your eyes closed, playing a distracting game, rehearsing meditation, etc. These are things you can do to relax. Try visualization or thinking of a memory that makes you laugh or smile. When you practice relaxation on your own time, it will be easier to come back to when you are in the midst of your anger emotion.

2. Think differently

So we can't all just snap our fingers and 'think differently', doing so takes time, practice, and effort. But learning to question your

anger can give you some insight on what's actually happening. A refresher from the previous section - what is making you angry? Why is it making you angry? How do you feel about it? Most times when we are angry we are so quick to say *this isn't working!* or *this is awful and I feel terrible* - I will also refresh you here - thinking negatively will only allow negative thoughts to happen. When negative thoughts happen your perception changes. As easy as this is said and as repetitive as it is to hear that positivity is our best way to think, it really is. Change your way of thinking and develop a habit or mantra of letting yourself know that anger does not solve anything and that it will make you feel worse in the long-run.

3. Change your environment

Sometimes when we become very angry, we lose control before we even realize it. Now things are broken, words were said, and the police are on their way for noise complaints. As exaggerated as this may seem, this actually happens more than you think, and it's because of anger and how you deal with it. To avoid things going this far, in the heat of the moment (usually when you feel yourself getting all revved up) tell your opposing arguer that you need some time to think and just walk away. Or if you are in a 'triggering' situation where you see or hear something that makes you aggravated, change your scenery. This could be as simple as switching rooms, or as dynamic as going for a drive or a long walk.

4. Focus on your breathing

Becoming aware of your feelings is one thing, but being aware of your symptoms as a result of your feelings is another story. Again, when you feel angry in the heat of the moment, you may want to take a mental inventory of yourself. Is your heart racing? Is your body tense? Do you feel stiff? Are your brows furrowed? Are your thoughts raging? These are clear marks on your breaking point. Even if it's just for one minute, drown everything out and take a minute to slow your breathing down. Inhale on a count to five, hold for three, and exhale for seven. Repeat until you feel a little calmer.

5. Do a body relaxing meditation

To do this, simply lay down on a flat and preferably comfortable surface. Close your eyes and focus on one muscle group at a time. Tense while holding your breath, and release while exhaling all the air out of your lungs. Pause the tensing of your muscles, breathe normally and move on to the next muscle group. The muscle groups you should focus on are:

- a. Feet, toes, and ankles
- b. Calves
- c. Thighs and buttocks
- d. Stomach, abs, and lower back
- e. Chest and shoulders
- f. Arms
- g. Wrists, hands, and fingers
- h. Neck and jaw
- i. Face (facial expressions)

6. Stretch

When we are angry, we feel tense. The best way to relieve this tension is to stretch - or you could even try yoga since it has so many benefits.

7. Play happy music

Happy music doesn't mean children's songs, lullabies or music that makes you want to dance (although this works too). Happy music means whatever music that is going to calm you down. For some people this means jazz or classical. For others, such as myself, heavy metal does the trick!

8. Release your angry energy

Whatever this means to you, do it. For some people, this could be getting a good workout in. For others, it simply means sitting down and writing or drawing. Whatever you do, do not just sit there and be angry. The point of this exercise is to do something else that releases the energy but doesn't get you more riled up.

This is not a complete list of what you can do to calm and control yourself when you feel mad; however, it is a start to get you dealing with this emotion in a more healthy way. The one thing to keep in mind for when you are seriously upset is that the emotion that you are feeling

should not be avoided or run from because it is here to serve a purpose. This purpose is worth finding out more about and will do you great success in furthering your personal growth adventure.

Chapter Summary

The bottom line about anger and the emotions that stem from it is that if you continue to suppress them the emotion will have you do or say some unhelpful and unhealthy things. Whether that be to yourself or to someone else, if it isn't controlled, learned about, and looked at from a distance, it will take over. Like any emotion - good or bad - emotions that take control dictate your life and how you choose to live it. No one and nothing should have this power over you so continue to learn all that you can about your anger so that you can gain insight and develop those strengths associated with it.

In this chapter you learned:

- What anger really is
- Why it's not a bad thing
- What can happen if it becomes a bad thing
- How to control it
- Why you shouldn't suppress it.

In the next chapter, you will learn about trust and integrity. You will learn why it's difficult to trust other people and yourself, as well as knowing when to trust and how to tune into your inner intuition. By the end of the next chapter, you will understand more about how to build relationships based on trust and how to earn it back if it's been broken.

Chapter Eight: Trust

Trust may not be the first human emotion you think of when considering emotional intelligence, but maybe it should be. Trust is the foundation of all things and branches out to how we feel about our relationships with spouses, family members, friends, co-workers, employers, and even strangers. Trust also plays a big part in how we live our own lives because we must trust ourselves and our decisions in order to move forward. Diving right into what trust is, here are a few examples as it's not JUST an emotion.

- It's a set of actions that require others to be dependable
 - Such as relying on someone to grab our kids from school
- It's a belief where we give others credit for behaving a certain way
 - Such as making sure our new partner makes a good impression
- It's a feeling of certainty that someone says what they mean and does what they say
 - Such as believing that you will get paid on a certain date at a certain time for your work ethic
- It's more about believing in yourself than on external situations
 - Such as listening to your intuition more

The definition of trust is so complex that researchers specializing in social psychology found that there are two kinds of trust: **cognitive trust** and **affective trust**. **Cognitive trust** comes from the internal instincts that we draw from and these are based on our knowledge and experiences about *who* we can safely trust. **Affective trust** draws from our emotional sense about other people, which means that we trust others based on how we feel about them. Confidence and security play large roles in affective trust. Put simply, cognitive trust is to trust

someone by using your head, and affective trust is to trust someone by using your heart.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Trust

Trust is dynamic in the fact that it can be broken, repaired, lost or found in someone. You can either gain someone's trust and lose it, then take a long time before you can gain it back - if at all. Or, you can have someone who breaks your trust and then make a decision based on whether they deserve to earn it back. There is also the factor that you can trust yourself before trusting someone else.

To have trust and to be willing to give it out are both very important because this emotion plays a part in every emotion that we experience. To sum it up into a short sentence, to be trusting or trustworthy means that there is the certainty that someone or something is reliable, genuine, strong, and adaptable. While this may seem easy and straightforward, for some people trust is hard to give out or even come by. A big reason why trust is so important is that it is essential to have in every social relationship you encounter in your life. If someone doesn't trust you, then it can be hard to get close to them and bond - and vice versa. This is because we are social creatures that vibe, connect, grow, learn, and thrive off each other. Other reasons why trust is so essential in our lives are:

1. We can do so much more with trust

Imagine something that you want to do, imagine what happens when no one is around to help you out or give you advice. Simple tasks will seem like mountains to climb, such as having to move, getting by when you have little, or raising a child. When you have a support team that trusts you and you trust them, moving, borrowing money, and raising a child will seem like anthills.

2. Trust keeps friends and relationships

Trust in a relationship is very important because once it is gone, it takes a while to gain it back and there is still a part of you (or the opposing person) that has their guard up which will never come down. By building trust and keeping it, friendships and

partnerships are much more resilient and close. When we trust others and have their trust in return, we feel understood and we are more likely to be heard and helped.

3. We become more genuine

To put our faith in someone means that we are dropping our walls and trusting that they don't abuse the opportunity. We become certain that our secrets and deepest desires will not be leaked or revealed to others. We are letting someone in when we decide to trust them and so we are allowing them to know us for WHO we are and how we are - even at our worst.

4. Trust gives us positivity

Some people in your life may not be trustworthy. However, others are trustworthy and when you do finally drop down your walls and let them in, you may be willing to trust someone else based on your positive experience. When someone breaks your trust, it's almost as if a PTSD effect takes place in which you may think more negatively about people based on your previous experiences.

When we put our trust in others and ourselves, we learn how to see the world in a better light because we choose to surround ourselves with people who won't let us down.

When we let our guard down and learn to open up, we put faith into the universe that we won't get burned for it. Some of the most trustworthy and trusting people live the happiest lives because they know who to trust and who not to. This doesn't mean that we should trust everyone though, as there are very dark personalities in the world that will manipulate you and take advantage of you to get their own way. Learning about this emotion benefits you because you can learn what to do when confronted with a dark person.

The main reason why people have difficulty trusting others or themselves is based on their previous experiences in which they have always trusted the wrong people. Trusting yourself has nothing to do with how you feel about yourself or having the inability to listen to your intuition. In fact, it has everything to do with your experiences. The reason why someone wouldn't put faith in themselves is that when they did, they let themselves down because of the fact that they trusted the 'wrong' people. This is where trust issues develop.

The dark side of trust revolves around trust issues which can result in less intimacy, trouble becoming close to someone and feeling disconnected from yourself. Trust issues stem from being hurt or abandoned in your past and so it can be overwhelming to trust again - especially if you are triggered. If you feel as though you struggle to trust people it's probably because you are afraid of being hurt, betrayed, taken for granted, or manipulated again (see chapter five for how to overcome your fears). Some may fear telling the truth or being truthful at all because their experiences of being open and honest have lead them to experience punishment and resentment. For example, if you had kissed someone while you were in a relationship with someone else and told your spouse, but they lashed out at you and continued to bring it up in future arguments, you are less likely to be truthful in the future again. Or, if you told someone you trust about your mutual friend that was going through some trouble to gain some insight and advice, then told your friend later and they responded by disowning you. You may avoid trying to help friends in similar situations in the future, even though all you tried was to gain some helpful advice and offer some support to your friend.

Ultimately, trust issues stem from a preconceived notion based on past experiences that you are going to get hurt or betrayed no matter what. This can make you shut down and isolate yourself from making new relationships. When you intentionally miss out on forming friendships, networking, and building on a potentially intimate relationship you deprive yourself of your worth and eventually start to self-sabotage. This then results in the lack of self-confidence, missed opportunities for personal growth, loneliness, and even social anxiety disorders. Now knowing how trust can turn into a weakness, the following list contains some of the biggest disadvantages of having trust issues:

1. You trust no one out of fear that they are not genuine

This is one disadvantage to trust because it causes you to overthink. You may look at someone and want to believe them, but still have your guard up because they *could* be lying. When you come across someone who is actually being upfront and straightforward with you, you still have your own personal belief

and because of this, you will miss out on a potentially great friendship or opportunity.

2. Healthy relationships don't exist

Have you ever been betrayed - and from that betrayal - someone new comes around which then triggers you by doing or saying something your ex did or said? From this, you lash out, fly your walls up, and start accusing them. Then it leads to a fight which then leads to disappointment, resentment, and shame. Or maybe you are at the other end of that stick - have you gotten into a new relationship and felt as if the air was sucked out of you? You can't do anything, talk to anyone, go anywhere without first checking in. You are constantly holding the weight of your relationship because they have become possessive or needy. If this sounds all too familiar, you are in an unhealthy relationship. If this sounds like you - but you may not notice it yet - then you may need to overcome your trust issues.

3. You are constantly checking and questioning everyone and everything

If you are suffering from a trust issue, you may feel the need to overthink peoples' behaviors. You may feel the need to ask who your friend or spouse is texting. When your parents or best friend tells you they are going somewhere but then find yourself checking their location from your phone just to see if they are telling the truth. You may feel the need to do these things so that you can be sure to actually trust them when the time comes. However, this is wrong and will keep you up at night. This shows signs that you have a lack of control and need constant reassurance.

4. You always feel on edge or angry

Whether you are angry with other people for betraying your trust, or you are angry with yourself for not being able to trust, you constantly feel angry all the time. Constant anger will develop anxiety, overthinking disorder, negative thoughts and added tensions which can affect your physical and mental health.

5. Paranoia develops

When paranoia grabs hold of you, you may feel as though you can

read people's minds, or feel as though everyone is out to get you. Developing paranoia can make you jumpy or be angry over the littlest things. Also, it is the cause of most overthinking disorders.

6. You become lonely

No one likes to be lonely, but worse than that, no one likes to feel lonely even when they are surrounded by others. From the result of paranoia, you may feel as though the lack of trust you feel for others leaves you hopeless and alone. You may even feel as though it's their fault. Even though you want to share your true thoughts and feelings with someone, because of the lack of trust you have for people you are afraid to let anyone in, thus resulting in loneliness.

Having trust issues can make you miss out on life itself as it can cause social anxiety disorders which may lead to agoraphobia, loss of self-esteem, and cause extreme damage to different parts of the brain. Having one's guard up is okay, however, if paranoia, depression, or anger becomes your life, it may be time to start looking for more help.

Sitting with Trust

It's okay to have trust issues until it starts to take over and disrupt our well-being. It's okay to trust people too, but if trusted too much too soon, we can get hurt. So, what is the balance between the two? We either trust too much or not enough. Perhaps the only time we should sit with trust is to listen to our intuition. When we really pay attention to how we feel, what we are thinking, and become aware of the situation at hand, we can develop our sense of intuition. Intuition is our inner guide, it's the little voice inside our heads that tell us to stay or run. A lot of the time, people don't listen to their internal voice because they either don't know how, or they don't trust themselves. Other things get in the way such as:

- **Overthinking and overanalyzing everything** - When our minds go into overdrive which leaves us second-guessing our decisions and questioning other's intentions.
- **'Shoulds'** - Shoulds stem from blaming someone else or looking

through a lens on ‘if I do this, will someone like me?’ Should distance you from your intuition rather than just focusing on what you know and think is best.

- **Prejudices** - These are the thoughts that automatically pop in our heads about judgments made based on your previous experiences. Essentially, it is to have a biased opinion which decreases your ability to tap into your internal voice.
- **Really wanting something** - When we focus on what we really want, it feels more like a need. For example, if we wanted children, acceptance, power, etc. we tend to ignore the red flags. When we ignore these red flags, we are ignoring our intuition, and almost always something bad happens.
- **Past trauma** - If you were abused as a child, the brain grows and develops in different ways, making it difficult to listen to our instincts because they have been altered. In this way, you don't ever learn how to trust yourself, so you don't listen to yourself either.

So, how do you balance trusting too much or too little? You follow your instincts and become aware of your inner voice. You use your intuition as a guide which is also learning how to trust yourself. With practice, you will get better. Here are ways you can improve your awareness of your intuition:

1. Clear your mind

When your mind is distracted by this, that, and the next thing, it's hard to hear the inner voice that is quieter than the rest of your thoughts. You can slow your mind down by practicing meditation or relaxation exercises like yoga, mindful breathing, and thought awareness.

2. Be aware of your physical sensations

Part of listening to your intuition is having the ability to pay attention to what's going on in your body. The fear response may

kick in, or it could be that you get goosebumps for only a second. Your heart may skip a beat, or you may be feeling unsure or cautious out of nowhere.

3. Focus on yourself

Before committing to something or diving head-on into something, make sure you take a minute to think about it. These are the best times where you will need to tune right into yourself. Most times, if we feel the desire to be liked, we tend to agree to every request without thinking about it first. Every friend or relative gets an instant “Yes!” even if the request is totally inconvenient and may even be bad for you. This doesn't mean to say “No” all the time, but it's important to train yourself to stop and analyze a situation before giving a response. If that means saying “No” to a friend sometimes, then so be it. You will get a lot more benefits out of that decision in the long run.

4. Act on your instincts

Here you have two options. Either act on how you are feeling if the feeling is right - like run away, or say yes. Or, if you aren't quite sure, go back to the first step and clear your mind - if you can. The most important thing is that you listen to your inner voice and use it as a guide to do what it tells you to do.

Learning to trust your intuition will bring all sorts of opportunities into your life that you might have missed before. Since it also plays a big effect in developing a balance between trusting too much or too little, it can also bring happiness and success. See your intuition as something to strengthen, the more attention and time you give to yourself about your intuitive mind, the more you will be able to make it stronger, and the more on point it will become.

Overcoming and Developing Trust

The key to listening to your instincts and overcoming your trust issues is first learning the signs of a trustworthy individual. When you know what to look for, you know how to build upon the foundation of trust that is already there. Here are signs that an individual is trustworthy:

- They are consistent in what they say and do
- They show high signs of empathy, compassion, and humility
- They create boundaries and respect your boundaries
- They know how to compromise and solve problems
- Everyone is relaxed - including you
- They are patient
- They show integrity and gratitude
- They are straight to the point even if it doesn't benefit them or hurts you
- They do not show signs of being desperate
- They do not gossip
- They like to learn, and are fast at learning new things and new boundaries
- They are supportive.

Now that you know the signs of a trustworthy person, it should help you know when to listen to your instincts and who to trust when you need to. Having trust, trusting yourself and overcoming your trust issues are just about everything you need to know about trust, but what do we do when we have made a mistake and lose trust? Here is how each, the offender (one who messed up), and the victim (one who was betrayed) can rebuild upon each other's trust:

For the Offender:

Come clean

If you have made the mistake, then fight whatever negative thoughts are telling you to run away from the problem and just come clean. If you don't, sooner than later the victim will find out and know about it, and you may lose a friend if you aren't honest. A few things to know before you come clean is to first know what you are going to say. Then once you have gathered your details, figure out the introduction to your apology by letting the victim know that you value your relationship which is why you are being honest now. **Show remorse** over the

situation and make sure to keep a cool, leveled head if the victim decides to get angry or upset with you. Remember, you are the one who was dishonest and so you need to be the one to manage your emotions and let them vent.

Open yourself emotionally

What this means is to hear them speak or vent to you once you have said your sincere apology and were completely honest with them. **Listen empathetically**, meaning do not argue back, and just keep a cool head about the situation. Make sure there are no other distractions and completely listen. Try to understand where they are coming from, and listen for ways to solve the issue and manage how this won't happen again. When they are finished talking **ask for forgiveness**, literally. Say, "can you find it in your heart to forgive me for what I have done, as I am sorry and will make sure this doesn't happen again." Don't blame or make them feel as if they were the ones responsible for the reason you did what you did. **Soul search** and find out your own reasons as to why you did what you did because only you are responsible.

Engage in every interaction with them with complete transparency

Once the apology is made, and the victim has said their peace, and all is forgiven, it's time to build the relationship back up again. Every interaction you have, make sure you are always open, clear, and honest. Share secrets and allow them to share theirs, but whatever you do, do not make the same mistake again.

For the Victim:

Forgive

If you are having a hard time forgiving the person, keep in mind that holding onto resentment, hate, or any negative feelings will damage parts of your brain and set you up for more trust issues with others. We don't want that. So, either forgive, or move forward, but now it's your turn to be honest. If they can't be forgiven, then find it in your heart to let them go and start by forgiving yourself for having to do this. On the other hand, if you know that someone is dishonest with you then **after a period of time, confront them by asking them first before assuming**. The goal is to get them to tell you what they did, not run

from you by feeling as though they are being attacked. Approach them in a calm manner and if after you have approached them they still deny everything, it may be best to find more evidence or move on with your life. Holding onto baggage is never healthy.

Open conversations

During a conversation whether they came clean, or you had to make them come clean, remember to use 'I feel' statements so that they don't feel like the victim too. Don't start with blame and throughout your conversation try not to point blame. Blaming them will make them feel the need to be defensive, which is something we want to avoid.

Move on by talking about the betrayal

After the situation has diffused and if you are still feeling betrayed a bit after the circumstances, it may be best to talk to a counselor or someone that you do trust to gain some more insight. The goal is to not hold your feelings inside because they will always find a way to come out and most times in the most unexpected and consequential ways.

Heal from your experience

If you still need some more help getting past this trust breaking experience, the best ways to heal from it is to continue seeking advice from a professional, start a journal or a blog, or get rid of the negative energy by being artistic in your own creations. When you do confront this person again or talk about the person, try to avoid bashing them as this will slow your process of forgiveness down. When hitting the reset button on your friendship or relationship, keep note that all your questions should be answered first, then once it's done, let it be done. Don't obsess over it, don't bring it up in future arguments, and never blame or gaslight them. This can quickly turn into control and abuse on your part.

Regaining trust is never easy, and it takes a lot of work from both parties to overcome the situation. By following the previous steps, you are sure to have a lasting relationship and if not, at least it was a learning experience. Never hold on to grudges and always make sure that both parties are transparent with each other - because no one likes a tit-for-tat relationship.

Chapter Summary

The truth of the matter about trust is that whether your giving trust out or you are trying to receive it, the fact of the matter is that you are going to get let down at some point. No one is perfect and sometimes things happen that are entirely out of our control. If this sounds familiar then keep in mind that this can happen to others as well. People who are truly trustworthy will come around, be transparent with you at all times, and make sure that when they are going to or feel like they will do something wrong, they come forward first.

In this chapter you learned:

- What trust is and what it's not
- What trust issues are and how they are unhelpful
- How to sit with trust through learning about your internal intuition and instincts
- How to listen to your intuition
- How to rebuild trust once it's broken
- How to let go of your personal trust issues.

In the next chapter, you will learn about what regret is, what it can lead to, and how to deal with it. This next chapter also tells you why you *shouldn't* regret things and why.

Chapter Nine: Regret

Ever woken with a bad hangover from an awesome night out with your friends and think to yourself as you stare into the toilet bowl ‘never again?’ This is a form of what some people may call regret. Maybe you said something to someone you wish you could take back, or sit down with yourself reminiscing on all the things you wish you could go back in time and do differently. This is what’s called *living* with regret. Many people may view regret as a negative emotion, but in fact, it’s neither negative or positive because it promotes personal growth and learning experiences.

When we are regretful, we tend to feel shame, embarrassment, and sometimes guilt. **There are no proven benefits or disadvantages of regret** (strengths and weaknesses) because it is simply an ‘in between feeling.’ Self-blame and criticism are often associated with feeling regretful and because it revolves around the past, it may be more challenging to overcome because our past is permanent and cannot be changed. Perhaps the one good thing that can come from regret is learning to live with this feeling and learning from the mistakes that you have made. A bad thing that can revolve around regret is that if we don’t learn to view it differently or overcome our regretful mistakes it can lead us down a winding path of mental health issues. These mental health problems may include:

- Fear of making decisions - indecisive behavior
- Anxiety revolving around the regretful mistake
- Sadness in regards to a certain event from the past
- Various levels of guilt and shame
- Anger

While feeling regret is neither beneficial or non-beneficial, it mainly creates negative emotions if we don’t take care of it. But learning from it can create feelings of happiness when we are able to release the tension regret brings us.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Overcoming Regret

There may not be any obvious signs of the strengths and weaknesses of feeling regretful, however, that doesn't mean the way we act and think aren't beneficial or negative to our health. What this means is that even though we feel regret, shame, and guilt - all difficult emotions to process - it doesn't mean that we can't benefit from feeling them. So, when we take a look at ourselves up close all we see and feel are past mistakes that we continue to beat ourselves up about repeatedly, leaving us feeling sad, angry, and even confused. But, when we take a step back and look at the reality of our circumstances there is a little light that shines through these feelings - here they are now:

1. Every decision gives you an opportunity to make better decisions

The thing about all our emotions is that they are a result of our actions. Our actions are defined by our choices, and our choices are decided upon by how we think and feel in that moment. Whatever decision you made in a given moment (whether you regret it or not) is because you wanted to do it in that moment. There was a part of you that felt in that moment when you made your choice and chose your direction, that it was the right thing to do. There is no way anyone can define or predict their futures so we make decisions based on what's happening right now. Don't regret it because whatever decision you made then helps you make wiser ones now as you still don't know what the future holds - so go with the flow.

2. Mistakes and failure promote resilience

Imagine if we could tell the future, how would we live our lives? Still, nothing would be perfect because instead of guessing what would happen, we would already know, which would defeat the purpose of life. If we always made the right choices based on knowing what the future holds, we would all be going about life trying to change the outcome when the outcome would always remain the same - with that comes no resilience. We need failure and disappointment to point us in the direction we are going to go

and to shape our lives and make us become the people we are destined to be. So, in a sense, without regret, there is no destiny. Without destiny, there is no personal character, and without that, what are we?

3. Every 'wrong' move is another opportunity for self-improvement and forgiveness

Wrong moves on your part are beneficial for learning and growing into the amazing person you are trying to become. Forgiving yourself is the first challenge to accepting the consequences of your actions and moving on with your life. When we sit with regret and guilt, we tend to self-sabotage which leads us nowhere because we aren't concentrating on the future and what's right in front of us. When what's right in front of our eyes could be potentially the only thing that saves us from our self-doubt and criticism.

4. The freedom to make decisions is your right as a person

Imagine if you didn't have a say or a choice in all of the choices you have ever made. Imagine the clothes you wore were picked for you or the relationships were prearranged. Imagine a life in which you had no say including - when you ate, where you slept - as if you were a puppet in someone else's fairytale. Wouldn't you feel pretty hopeless? Powerless or even limited? Your beliefs wouldn't be yours, your mistakes wouldn't be learned from. It would feel as though you were living a lie. Just for a moment take your mind to that place. Now, look at what you have now. Everything you have is because you made the decisions leading you to where you are now. What does it feel like to make your own choices? You may feel free and independent - these feelings are good emotions to experience and so roll with it.

5. By making a bad decision, you allow yourself to redefine what you *do* want in life rather than what you *don't*

This speaks for itself meaning whatever decision you make (in this example a regretful one), you have the opportunity to search and figure out what you actually want. So you made a decision you thought you wanted - turns out it didn't work out - so now you can

redefine what you want again. Mistakes like these are beneficial for personal growth.

6. You cannot figure out what can go right if you don't feel the pain from what went wrong

So you messed up a really great thing with your ex. Or maybe you told a little white lie that actually became bigger than you had imagined. Perhaps you accidentally left the stove on and left the house and now you lost everything (okay, so that's a bit dramatic). The point is that all of these events can cause a significant amount of pain. But when you finally run into another person that was more meant for you than your last one, you can learn from your last one and bask in what feels so right. Your insurance covers your house going up in flames so now you have a better house with everything you had hoped to obtain, then you can really appreciate the feeling of doing things right this time. See what I mean? Every bit of pain you feel from a mistake or failure benefits you when you learn to roll with the punches and stop regretting your actions.

7. Your decisions do not define who you are based on the outcome

When you make a good or a bad decision it shouldn't define who you are as a person. It should show you that based on the outcome of your decision you can be reminded of who you are and even strive for who you want to be. Some decisions serve as a 'wake up call' and other decisions serve no purpose at all except every decision are things to reflect on.

8. Every downfall and subsequent choice are learning opportunities

Every downfall has opportunity and requires choices. Whatever negative outcomes you may experience, it is up to you to choose how to handle them through your power of choice making. Every downfall you experience and every choice you make in dealing with negative experiences serve to provide learning opportunities. These learning opportunities are yours to decode and, essentially, give you two options - learn from them or dwell on them.

Every reason in this list, if flipped around can be seen in a bad way. Everything you do when it comes to regret can serve a purpose and it can hold you back - or it can do both. This is why regret has no strengths or weaknesses because regret in itself is a strength and a weakness combined. When we dwell on the past, we are living with regret. But when we use regret to motivate us to make better decisions, we succeed and live a better future.

Chapter Summary

As you can see, there isn't much more to say about regret except that there is light with the darkness of regret. When you learn to let go of regret by looking at it from a different perspective, you can truly understand that feeling regretful is only a waste of your time. As much as regret serves a purpose, all it is is decisions that are linked to what you go through. In short, life is what you make it and the future is always going to be uncertain. The only thing you can do is learn from your feelings of regret and see that regret is perhaps the only thing that is holding you back from going after what you truly want and deserve.

In this chapter, you learned:

- Regret is a middle emotion that serves a purpose or doesn't

- How you can view regret differently

- Because of regret, you can benefit from it

- Overcoming regret is about changing your mindset

- Two choices of feeling regretful are to dwell on it or learn from it

In the next chapter, you will learn about surprise and shock. You will learn that as 'surprising' as it might be, it has its downfalls more than it has its benefits. By the end of the next chapter, you will understand more about what to do with shock and surprise.

Bonus Chapter: Surprise | Shock

I have made this a bonus chapter due to the fact that the emotions of surprise and shock are what some people take for granted or overlook the most. You may not recognize that surprise is an emotion, but it is. Because surprise - by its very nature - happens in the least expected moments, it is quite difficult to control or just be in the moment with it. When shock or surprise hits us, there isn't much we can do about it, so in this bonus chapter we are mainly going to learn about the importance of shock and surprise.

Much like regret, surprise is a positive and negative emotion. Not because of the emotion itself but because of the physical result of the emotion. For example, surprise can be shown when we show smiles for happiness, raised brows for astonishment, and an open mouth for excitement. On the other hand, surprise can be shown with your hands on your hips and a furrowed brow for anger, scrunched nose for disgust, and a blank stare for sadness. These negative signs of surprise can be defined as shock. To become surprised or shocked is when something happens unexpectedly or unannounced that catches you off guard. If someone hosted a surprise birthday without you knowing, you would show happiness. If a loved one passed away, it would take you a while to overcome your sadness due to the shock of it all. See the difference, although very similar?

Shock and surprise come when you least expect, when a situation arises where you have never experienced it before, and when something or a situation are unexpected. Say you were in a hurry to get to work and you missed out on breakfast. When you pull into a Tim Hortons or Starbucks for a quick snack, it would be a shock or surprise to you when they tell you they don't have what you are asking for - because it was the last thing you expected. Or when your friends ask you to go out with them for a night and dine and dash just to have fun or to be able to say that you at least did it once. The thrill and excitement of rebelling may catch you by surprise after the incident. Lastly, say you have been working late lately, and one night you come home early to find your

spouse decorating the house for your anniversary, you would feel surprised or shocked because it was unexpected.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Surprise | Shock

Surprise can come in many forms and in many different ways, however, most of the time surprise is a happy emotion. Some people hate surprises where others love them. The reasons people may hate surprises is because they may not like the feeling of being unprepared. These people are usually perfectionists and like to control things, which isn't a bad thing. The people who like surprises usually go with the flow and are pretty relaxed most of the time. Tania Luna and Leeann Renninger, authors of the book 'Surprise: Embrace the Unpredictable and Engineer the Unexpected' say that surprise falls into four stages;

- **Freeze** - We are stunned by our experience or new situation.
- **Find** - We know something is up so we try to figure out what the surprise is.
- **Shift** - It shifts our attention to something new because of how our perception changes.
- **Share** - Being super excited about something that shocked or surprised you makes you want to share the experience.

Surprise is one of our main emotions that we experience but unlike the rest, it actually enhances our emotions like sadness and happiness. Studies show that surprise can make experiences more memorable because of the fact that it was so surprising or shocking. If something is hard to believe or take in, you are bound to remember it differently as your brain files these experiences according to you the way you feel about them. Surprise is usually short-lived and the reason most people overlook it as an actual emotion is that it doesn't seem to have much of an effect on the individual. Here are some key benefits to the emotion surprise:

1. It's memory boosting

As briefly mentioned previously, surprise is an emotion where you are bound to remember your experiences better because they are more memorable. In the hippocampus region of our brains, surprise activates it and processes the information in its desired location to help us recall the experience in full detail later. This is why it is easier to recall happy memories from your childhood in more detail than all the rest of your memories.

2. Enjoyable surprises make you generally happier

As surprise leads us to experience emotions to a higher degree, it makes sense as to why pleasurable surprises would make us become happier individuals. For example, we know that we are going to receive a gift on Christmas and our birthdays, but if we were to get a gift out of nowhere, we would be surprised which set off an enhanced happy emotion.

3. It can promote a spark in your intimate relationships

Oftentimes we get used to our situations and so we get used to doing everyday things with our spouse. When we mix it up a bit by giving or setting up a surprise, the relationship becomes stronger because you are doing something new. Also, when you do surprise your partner by coming up with new things to do together, you may bring back the honeymoon stage that you felt at the beginning of the relationship.

Surprises are best when they come out of nowhere so you don't expect things to happen or shock you but essentially surprise is about doing new things, changing up your routine, taking risks, and creating exciting activities to do with your loved ones. When you do these things purposely, you add a little more adventure to your life which is the foundation of surprise.

The downside of surprise isn't the emotion itself but the shock effect that you feel from your experiences. The types of stressful events that can cause such negative emotions of shock are:

- A car accident
- Get your heart broken by your lover
- Your child getting into a serious accident

- A loved one getting into serious danger or trouble
- Witnessing or being a victim of something frightening
- Hearing a story that makes you feel victimized or sympathetic such as your friend's dog dying
- Getting sued or something else legally binding
- Being pulled over by the police
- Being at or in a doctor's office and getting told something unexpected

The thing about negative surprise - shock - is that reading about something can trigger symptoms of something else, like anxiety. You also may feel more shock when you hear about a friend of a friend experiencing something awful. This happens because of our social need to connect which is normal. Some symptoms that you may experience from shock are feeling an out of body notion, your chest may feel tight, feeling sick and jittery, or you may just feel as if you cannot concentrate or think straight. These symptoms are normal when we find out about stuff that affects us internally and externally - even if it's not about us. These symptoms are the same response that we get from feeling afraid. Shock is kind of like being afraid except the fear is heightened in this sense, which is why we tend to feel spaced out or foggy minded when we hear bad or troubling news.

Giving yourself a chance to become aware of yourself when you feel like this is the best way to quickly overcome a shock. Allow yourself to distance your mind from what you witnessed, heard, or experienced and be patient with the information to process and settle in. Until your brain has figured out how to react and what to do with the information, you will not settle nor will you feel better. Whatever you need to do in that moment of shock, do it because this is your internal instincts kicking in as a coping mechanism so that you don't have to think so hard. No matter how long it will take - usually just a few moments - you need to give yourself time for your rational and logical part of your brain to come back online so that you can make a clear and wise decision on how you are going to handle your situation. This is called giving yourself enough time to let go of the initial shock.

Chapter Summary

Shock can feel intense, surprise can feel enlightening, but both are needed to develop and promote healthier and stronger emotions. As explained, surprise is not just an emotion but an enhanced sub-emotion due to certain experiences.

In this bonus chapter, you have learned:

- What surprise is
- What shock is
- Why they are important
- How they are connected to other emotions.

Final Words

Are you tired of falling under the influence of your emotions? Are you tired of getting upset with yourself because of the emotional impulses resulting from your emotions? Great because now that you have completely finished reading this book on emotions, you can get out of their trap. As stated in this book, not every emotion needs to be controlled but the more information you know and find about your emotions, the better off you will be and the more successful you will become at being *who* you want to be.

Happiness, sadness, fear, anger, guilt, shock, love, trust, disgust, and regret are all emotions that enter into our minds giving us physical symptoms which test us on what we do with these feelings. This is why it is so crucial to understand each emotion while learning, developing, improving and maintaining your emotional intelligence. No one is perfect, so of course, it is okay to completely lose control once in a while, but isn't the effort worth so much more than making mistakes that sometimes cannot be taken back?

As promised at the beginning of this book, you now have the knowledge to completely understand each emotion you feel on a regular basis. It is now up to you what you will do with this information. I kept my promise to you so why not create a promise to yourself with the information provided? Why stay confused when you can live more, breathe happier, and be who you are destined to be?

If you take anything away from this book, it should be that your emotions are always going to be there. They are a part of you and make you who you are based on your actions and responses to them. Developing the key coping mechanisms presented to you in each chapter are perhaps the most useful skills to improve on when enhancing your emotional intelligence skills.

Good luck to you on your way to a life full of success and a better understanding of how you can control yourself in the worst-case scenarios.

Cheers!

Notes

[←1]

Homeostasis - Healthful and balanced body state.

[←2]

Phantom Vibration - the perception that your mobile device is ringing or vibrating when it is not.